Design a "Rogues Gallery" hero and win!

255

Dragon®

MAGAZINE

psi kits

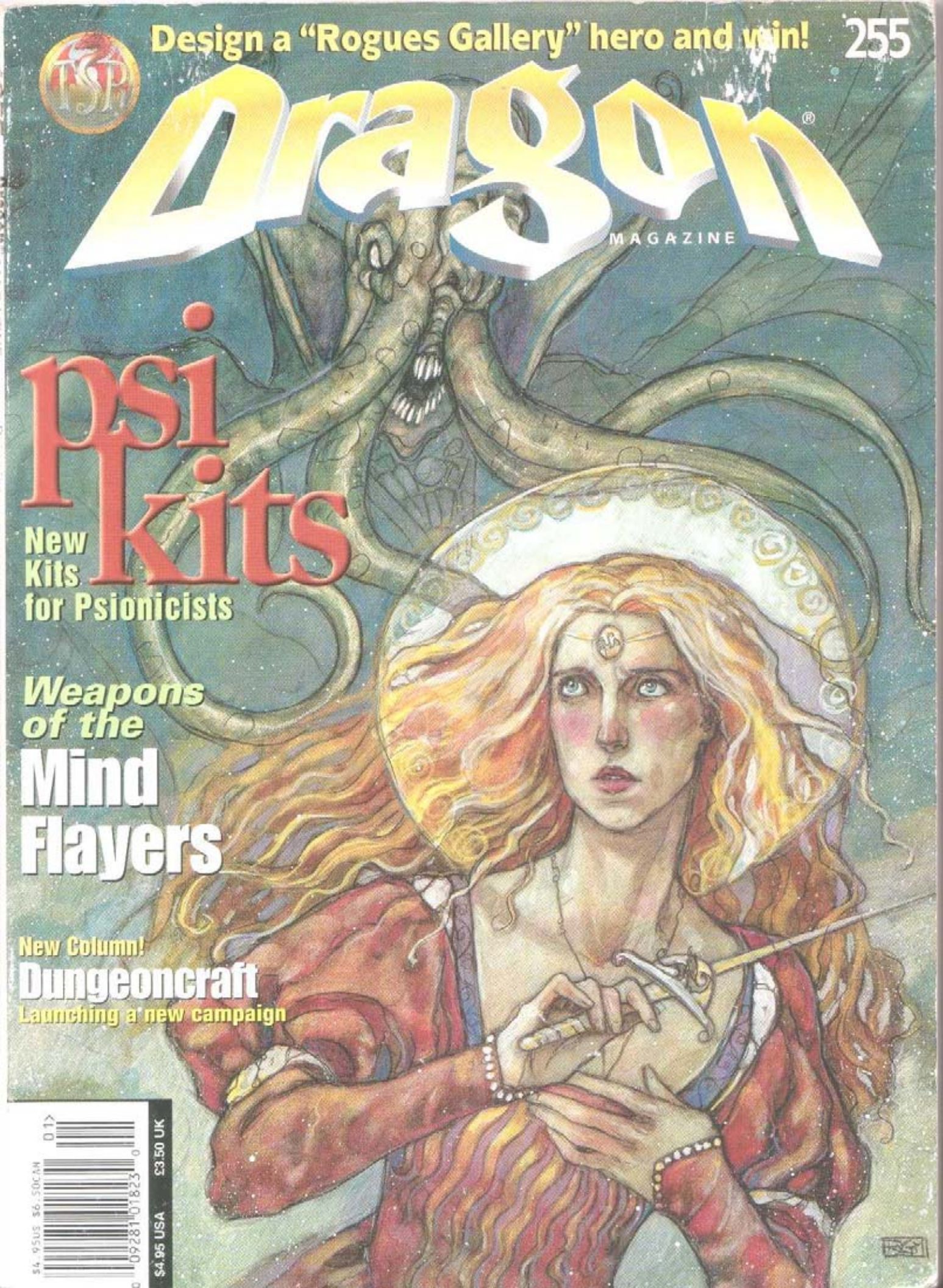
New Kits for Psionicists

Weapons of the Mind Flayers

New Column!

Dungeoncraft

Launching a new campaign



$4.95 USA £3.50 UK

COMING SOON

Call Toll Free 1-877-ALL-LOL3 to learn more about this title

Westwood™ STUDIOS

www.westwood.com

The Journal automatically chronicles your quest by identifying spells, describing creatures encountered, cataloguing magical recipes, showing skill levels and automapping your location.

©1998 Westwood Studios, Inc. Lands of Lore is a registered trademark and Westwood Studios is a trademark of Westwood Studios, Inc. 3Dfx and the 3Dfx logo are registered trademarks of 3Dfx Interactive Inc. All rights reserved.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Beyond the portal lies the most powerful Lands of Lore® experience yet.

Breathtaking 3D enhancements display the most intricate and immersive Lands of Lore world ever.

LANDS OF LORE III

Be a Warrior, Wizard, Cleric or Thief or combine two or more professions to customize your character class and strengthen your skills. Also, choose a magical familiar from any of the four guilds as your companion who will scout, spy, fight, heal and steal for you.

Hundreds of spells and enchanted items enable you to conjure magic, gain special abilities and ensure your survival.

Interact with scores of intriguing characters as you trek through six distinct gameworlds including: the Frozen Wastes, the Shattered Desert, and the haunted Underworld.

Psionics

Dragon®

Issue # 255 Volume XXIII, No. 8 January 1999

Features

The New Illithid Arsenal
Christopher Schwartz
The squid-heads just got tougher.
28

Psi-Kits
Owen K.C. Stephens & Lloyd Brown III
Ten new ways to put mind over matter.
36

Shadow Ways
Samuel M. Wright
The deadliest ninjas kill with a thought.
50

Baldur's Gate: Candlekeep
Chris Avellone
The new AD&D® computer game expands the Forgotten Realms® setting.
54

Powers of the Mind
Stephen Kenson
Psionics in the Marvel Super Heroes™ Adventure Game.
60

Fiction

Dark Legacy
Mel Odom
A year of war at sea begins with a brutal harbinger.
66

Departments

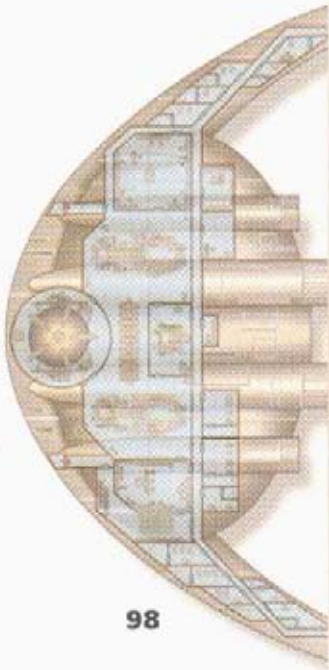
82 **Rogues Gallery**
Mel Odom Jherek and company are all that stands against "The Threat From the Sea" in this prelude to the year's new Forgotten Realms trilogy.

88 **Bazaar of the Bizarre**
Christopher Schwartz For both Dark Sun® and other AD&D® players, these "Life Shapes of Athas" are strange new magic.

92 **Wyrms of the North**
Ed Greenwood Thalagyrt might be a royal pain, but when you need an answer to your question, see "Old Lord Memory."

Ares

98 **Starships Perks & Flaws**
David Eckelberry & Andy Collins
For better or for worse, alterations to your space vehicles.



98

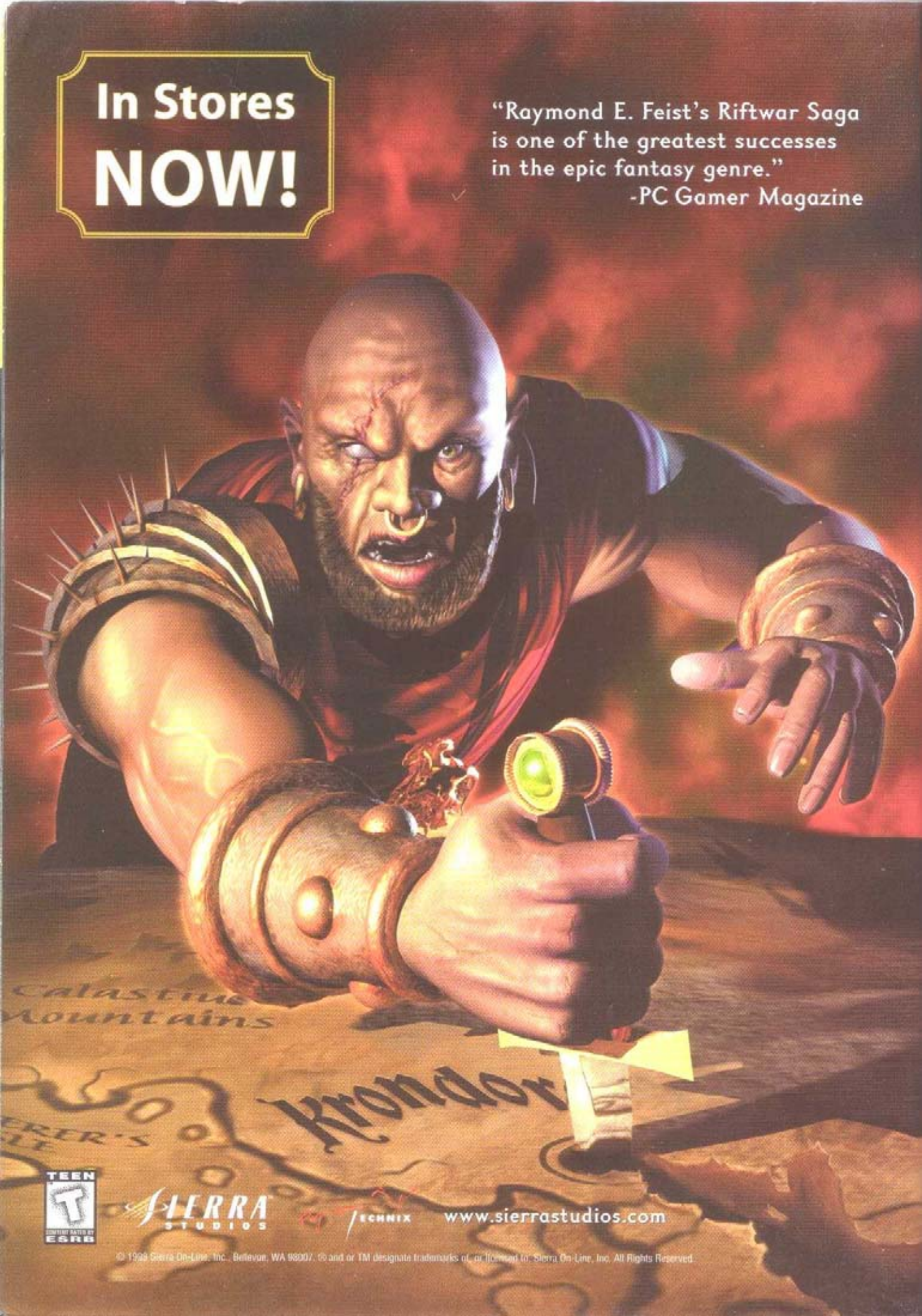
Columns

The Wyrm's Turn™ 6
D-Mail™ 8
Forum 12
Dungeoncraft 18
Sage Advice 24
Convention Calendar 78
PC Portraits 81
DragonMirth™ 110
Knights of the Dinner Table 112
TSR™ Previews 114
ProFiles 120

36

On the Cover

Rebecca Guay's lyrical work has graced many feature articles in recent issues, much to our readers' delight. For this month's cover, her first for *Dragon Magazine*, Rebecca's psionicist shields herself against a hungry illithid. Landing a cover assignment from us was not this popular artist's greatest accomplishment of the past few months, however. That honor would have to go to her recent marriage to illustrator Matthew Mitchell. Congratulations and best of luck to Matt and Rebecca from the staff of *Dragon Magazine*!



© 1999 Sierra On-Line, Inc., Bellevue, WA 98007. ® and or TM designate trademarks of, or licensed to, Sierra On-Line, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

A New Quest Has Begun.

16-bit color with real-time lighting

180 motion-captured 3D characters

60 spells to create and adapt

Tactically complex, turn-based combat

11 plot-twisting chapters

Return to a land of intrigue and adventure. Lead your band of five characters on a quest to recover the Tear of the Gods, a mystical relic coveted by a madman bent on spreading darkness across the land of Midkemia. From the dizzying heights of Krondor's Palace, to the haunted depths of a temple dedicated to an evil as ancient as the gods themselves, never before has an RPG given you so much of what you want.

RAYMOND E. FEIST'S

Return to Krondor™

The Official Sequel to the Best Selling RPG

The Wyrm's Turn™

New Year

One of the great pleasures of working on a magazine is that you get to start fresh each month. The January issue is especially exciting each year because it feels even more like a fresh start. Part of that feeling with this issue comes from launching some cool new projects.

The new ARES™ section takes the place of book and game reviews, leaving AD&D® articles just as much space as before. Both AD&D and ALTERNITY® players can find support here every month. We launch the new section with a particularly cool article, "Starship Perks and Flaws." Check out those maps by Lazz!

While it won't have a monthly presence, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game will also enjoy some regular support in these pages. We have a few good articles on hand, and more are on the way. Check out this month's "Powers of the Mind." Even if you haven't tried the new game—and why haven't you, anyway?—this article is full of good ideas for using psionics in any game. Again, the AD&D game still comes first, but we won't neglect players of the other current TSR® games. (And you'll still find a "Campaign Classic" in these pages from time to time.)

Many of our readers are longtime role-players, but we realize that newcomers sometimes need a little help getting a campaign started. While the new "Dungeoncraft" series is designed to help the neophyte DM, columnist Ray Winninger promises he'll also teach new tricks to us old dogs now and then.

Starting next issue, we'll add "Role Models," a miniatures column for DMs and players, not just painters. See this issue's "D-MAIL™" for more on this new series.

Every one of these additions came from suggestions in your letters and survey responses, and we haven't stopped using your advice to plan for the future. As always, we'd like to hear what you think of this issue, so send us a letter or visit us at www.tsr.com. If you'd like to spend some time chatting with the editors, visit at 10 P.M. Eastern on the first Friday of each month. One or more of us will be in the TSR chat room (seminar room), so you can give us a piece of your mind in realtime.

There are a few other surprises for 1999 in the works, but it's too soon to announce them. Suffice to say that it'll be an interesting year here at *DRAGON® Magazine*, so keep an eye on this page and on "TSR News." If you've enjoyed the magazine during the past few years, 1999 should be an especially good year.

DRAGON®

Publisher
Wendy Noritake

Editor-in-Chief
Bill Slavicsek

Executive Editor
Pierce Watters

Editor
Dave Gross

Art Director
Larry Smith

Associate Editor
Chris Perkins

Assistant Editor
Jesse Decker

Designer
Scott Ricker

Editorial Assistant
Chris Carlson

Production Manager
John Dunn

Advertising Sales Manager
Bob Henning

Advertising Traffic Coordinator
Bobbi Maas

Circulation Manager
Barbara Blaskowsky

Dragon® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly except November (twice monthly) by TSR, Inc., 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, United States of America. Periodical-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, WI, U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Dragon Magazine*, P.O. Box 469107, Escondido, CA 92046, U.S.A. USPS 318-790. ISSN 0279-6848. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders and change-of-address notices is: *Dragon Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, U.S.A.

DISTRIBUTION: *Dragon Magazine* is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Newsstand distribution throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom is by Curtis Circulation Company, 730 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646-3048; telephone: (201) 634-7400.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Subscription rates via periodical-class mail are as follows: $34.95 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S.; $52.95 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in Canada; £34.95 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £41.95 for 13 issues sent to an address in the UK; $57.95 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. Methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to *Dragon Magazine*, or charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to *Dragon Magazine*, P.O. Box 469107, Escondido, CA 92046, USA, email dragon@pcspublink.com; phone **1-800-395-7760**. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques or money orders made payable to TSR Ltd., or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd., as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

SUBMISSIONS: All material published in *Dragon Magazine* becomes the exclusive property of the publisher, unless special arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication. We welcome unsolicited submissions of written material and artwork; however, no responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. Any submission accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope of sufficient size will be returned if it cannot be published. We strongly recommend that prospective authors write for our writers' guidelines before sending an article to us. In the United States and Canada, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (9"2" long preferred) to Writers' Guidelines, c/o *Dragon Magazine* at the above address; include sufficient American postage or International Reply Coupons (IRC) with the return envelope.

ADVERTISING: For information on placing advertisements in *Dragon Magazine*, ask for our rate card. All ads are subject to approval by TSR, Inc. TSR reserves the right to reject any ad for any reason.

Contact: Bob Henning, Advertising Sales Manager, *Dragon Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, U.S.A., (425) 204-7262. In the northeast, contact: Sig or Scott Buchmayr, Buchmayr Associates, 137 Rowayton Avenue, Rowayton, CT 06853, (203) 855-8834.

Advertisers and/or agencies of advertisers agree to hold TSR, Inc. harmless from and against any loss or expense from any alleged wrongdoing that may arise out of the publication of such advertisements. TSR, Inc. has the right to reject or cancel any advertising contract for which the advertiser and/or agency of advertiser fails to comply with the business ethics set forth in such contract.

Dragon is a registered trademark of TSR, Inc. Registration applied for in the United Kingdom. All rights to the contents of this publication are reserved, and nothing may be reproduced from it in whole or in part without first obtaining permission in writing from the publisher. Material published in *Dragon Magazine* does not necessarily reflect the opinions of TSR, Inc. Therefore, TSR will not be held accountable for opinions or misinformation contained in such material.

® designates registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. ™ designates trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. Most other product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

' indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. The use of the name of any product without mention of its trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

©1998 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All TSR characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Death is the only reward for those who fail.

Behind you lie the gates to the stronghold of New Jollis, the largest city in all of South Vormis. You stand in the central quarter before the legendary Big Rocs' Cafe. The Duke has declared a state of martial law until the brigands that have been terrorizing his lands are defeated. Great riches and fame await the heroes that succeed, and their names shall be sung by troubadours throughout the land.

RUBIES of EVENTIDE

Adventure and Glory
await you in this Radical
New Online Role-playing Game.

- Over 200 Race/Class combinations
- Scores of shops with thousands of items
- See what your character sees in a 3D world
- Hundreds of magic spells that you can alter to suit your needs

www.rubiesofeventide.com

D-Mail™

Keep in Touch!

To share your opinions on this issue of the magazine, post a letter to "D-Mail," *Dragon® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA. Send email to dmail@wizards.com. All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. Include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed, and let us know how much of that address you'd like printed. (We'll assume city and state otherwise.)

For subscription inquiries, send email to dragon@pcspublink, or call 1 (800) 395-7760.

Full Review

I've been a reader of your wonderful magazine since 1993, and my collection dates back to issue #182. *Dragon® Magazine*, along with *Dungeon® Adventures*, is the best place to find interesting AD&D® stuff. I like your articles, especially those that give me ideas to spice up the history of my campaign, like "AD&D game Aliens" in issue #251, or "Orbs of Dragonkind" in issue #230, or "Ruins of Adlersburg" in issue #236, or any of the "Dragon Ecology" articles... well, let's stop now! I would like to see a "Dragon Ecologies" article in every other issue of the magazine, if possible. I also like "DragonMirth™" and "Knights of The Dinner Table." By the way, in issue #250, you said you want to hear your readers' feedback to keep improving. Here's my two-pence's worth.

In general: Try to avoid articles that are too rule-oriented, although I *do* like "The Laws of Spell Design" (from issue #242). I'm hungering for an article with definitive rules for creating magical items, too. I don't like kits that are too specific, like those presented in "Crypt Rangers and Defenders" in issue #234, because they are not easily introduced in any campaign. Moreover, I don't like new rules on combat, except when they are easy to learn and fast to introduce.

Themes: Personally, I don't like any sea or undersea adventure, so every issue with that theme is not as useful as the others, for me. You could have articles on sea-related topics once in a while, regardless of the topic of the magazine.

Interior Art: I *love* Rebecca Guay's work! I think she's one of the best artists who ever worked for TSR, along with Brom and DiTerlizzi. I also would like to see more paintings from Randy Post.

Covers: I can't remember the last time I saw an orc, a party of adventurers, somebody in a tavern, or a king on the cover. The fact is, since #225 you've presented dozens of dragons. It was nice at the start. I started to be annoyed after the first twelve months. I developed an irrational hatred for dragons after another year. Now I just can't stand any more dragons on the cover. Please, please, please, please return to variety. Dragon art can be on the cover of any June issue. Otherwise, I'd prefer something entirely different.

> I CAN'T REMEMBER the last time I saw an orc, a party of adventurers, somebody in a tavern, or a king on the cover.

Headings: I know this will sound silly, but can you please bring the old headers back? I miss them. The "Arcane Lore," "Bazaar of the Bizarre," and the "The Dragon's Bestiary" series, as well as new ones like "Rogue's Gallery," "Dragon Ecologies," or "Wyrms of the North," would look better to me with the old headers, which are surely bigger but also nicer.

"Wyrms of the North": I really liked the idea at first. Now it's become a bore: too many dragons for the same setting detailed by the same person. Can't Ed Greenwood write the same kind of articles with different monsters? I would like to see something like "Beholders of the North" or something like the old "Elminster's Notebook" (which was just one or two pages long, but it gave *great* ideas for my campaigns). Or, if you like dragons that much, you can try other settings or other writers.

"The Wizards Three": I don't really like the idea of three mages from three different worlds talking in Ed Greenwood's living room, but I use the spells.

"Arcane Lore": I like when there's history and campaign background as well as spells. For example, I like them very much when they introduce legendary mages into my campaign history. My players still whisper the name of Othyisar Du'Morde (from issue #203) with awe.

"Dragon's Bestiary": I like this column, but I'd prefer if you could give us more background and ecology information on each monster. This probably means you will have to reduce the number of monsters presented in every issue, but I think that any DM has enough monsters to survive.

Campaign-Specific Articles: Personally, I like them more than plain, basic AD&D stuff. A mix of the old "Campaign Journal" column and the "new" "Campaign Classics" could be printed in every issue. The Alternity® game can have a place in your magazine, too, but not so often. If you print an Alternity article, you shouldn't also include a campaign-specific piece, especially if it is not a "standard" setting like the Forgotten Realms® or Greyhawk®

campaigns. I'm hungering for articles on the AL-QADIM®, Kara Tur, Maztica, and DARK SUN® settings. (You've completely forgotten the last three.) Yes, I know there are those who would prefer not to see these settings covered at all.

Start printing ideas for campaigns: descriptions of new and old places, adventure ideas, NPCs, fiction, and ecologies. They don't have to be ten pages long—even a couple would do, as long they feature good ideas, ready to be introduced into game sessions. Even articles detailing new equipment, new spells, new monsters, or new magical items, as long as they have decent background notes. As I see it, there should always be space for ideas in your magazine, regardless of the setting. An idea is universal, so it is useful in any campaign world or setting.

Simon Mas
Bari, Italy

Reprints

I am a newcomer to the AD&D game, and I agree with Mark Papina's letter (in issue #252) concerning reprinting out-of-print D&D® literature. I would really like to see the original article you did on the Avariel, which appeared in issue #51. Better still, perhaps a new article entitled "The Missing Elves" that would include winged elves as well as shadow elves and other, lesser-known subspecies of elvenkin.

I have been reading *DRAGON Magazine* since issue #246. It makes for great reading, and the articles are very informative and useful.

Please change "Wyrms of the North" to "Monsters of the North." There are other powerful creatures out there besides dragons!

Please make "Giants of the Earth" (issue #249) and "By Any Other Name" (issue #251) recurring articles. For the latter, I would like to see drow (What does "Drizz't" mean anyway?) and dwarf names described.

I'd like to see a follow-up to Miranda Horner's excellent article "Beyond the Tree" (issue #251) focusing on the satyrs of Ansalon. According to the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ book, satyrs are the male counterpart of dryads and, like dryads, are sentient manifestations of the forces of nature. It would be interesting to see how shaping the land by the Great Dragons affected them and what role they play in the Fifth Age. Perhaps some act as henchmen/bodyguards to high-level Druid PCs.

DRAGON Magazine looks better with each issue. Keep up the good work.

Debbie Perron
Sherbrooke, Canada

Our reason for not *reprinting older articles should become clear after you've perused the "TSR Previews" section of this issue. On the other hand, if any older articles merit a revised treatment, as last summer's "The Missing Dragons," then we'll consider printing an updated version.*

See our note about "Wyrms of the North" after the next letter.

Rest assured that there are both more "Giants in the Earth" and "By Any Other Name" articles in the works! Both have garnered plenty of positive letters recently. And while she's one of the busiest women at TSR, Miranda Horner is already thinking about a follow-up to "Beyond the Tree."

That was easy! Try asking us for something hard next time!

Favorite Parts

I figured I'd spend ten minutes telling you how much enjoyment I receive out of the work that all of you do at *DRAGON Magazine*. I truly enjoy your magazine, and even though I would like to keep it as a home for mostly AD&D items, it is interesting to read about other games now and again. I usually just peruse these sections; if nothing else, they offer an opportunity to find out what scenarios and ideas the other systems/settings offer. Being a DM for years, I know that any concept can spark ideas for a good game from directions that I hadn't used before, so I appreciate this.

"Sage Advice" is always the first section that I read and the problems that people write in with are sometimes very interesting and amusing. The answers are always complete, and there is no telling how many questions Skip can answer before he finally tuckers out.

"Forum" is one of my favorites as well, and I think it is done beautifully. There is never really any response to the ideas brought up here from those of you who work so closely with the game that all of us love—and this is both good and bad. Perhaps, if there is an item with many differing opinions, one of you could chime in with an opinion that is not just from your readers.

Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT INTO COUNT REPUGNIE'S CASTLE!
THERE'S TOO MANY SKELETONS TO TURN THEM ALL!
STAND ASIDE, GUYS!
HEY, YOU UNDEAD! HOLD ON FOR A MINUTE!
WHAT? WHY SHOULD WE HOLD OUR WRATH FOR YOU, LITTLE ONE?
WELL, YOU SEE, I REPRESENT THE ACME PIANO KEY AND DENTURE COMPANY...
NOT BAD.
WAIT! WE WERE THINKING OF BRANCHING INTO BONE CHINA!

Back Issues

1. To order back issues of *Dragon Magazine*, mail a photocopy of the form below to *Dragon Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055.
2. Make checks or money orders payable to Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Please specify U.S. Funds on all non-U.S. checks or foreign bank draft orders.
3. This limited-time offer is good while supplies last.

Dragon Magazine Back Issue Order Form

Name : _____

Address : _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

___ #84	___ #103	___ #140	___ #167	___ #185	___ #206	___ #225
___ #85	___ #105	___ #141	___ #168	___ #186	___ #207	___ #226
___ #86	___ #107	___ #143	___ #169	___ #187	___ #208	___ #231
___ #87	___ #108	___ #145	___ #170	___ #188	___ #209	___ #232
___ #88	___ #109	___ #147	___ #171	___ #189	___ #210	___ #233
___ #89	___ #110	___ #149	___ #172	___ #190	___ #211	___ #235
___ #90	___ #119	___ #151	___ #173	___ #191	___ #212	___ #236
___ #91	___ #120	___ #152	___ #174	___ #192	___ #213	___ #237
___ #92	___ #121	___ #153	___ #175	___ #193	___ #214	___ #238
___ #93	___ #124	___ #154	___ #176	___ #194	___ #215	___ #239
___ #94	___ #126	___ #156	___ #177	___ #195	___ #216	___ #240
___ #95	___ #128	___ #157	___ #178	___ #196	___ #217	___ #241
___ #96	___ #129	___ #158	___ #179	___ #197	___ #218	___ #242
___ #97	___ #130	___ #160	___ #180	___ #198	___ #219	___ #243
___ #98	___ #131	___ #163	___ #181	___ #199	___ #221	___ #244
___ #99	___ #132	___ #164	___ #182	___ #201	___ #222	___ #246
___ #101	___ #133	___ #165	___ #183	___ #203	___ #223	___ #247
___ #102	___ #138	___ #166	___ #184	___ #204	___ #224	___ #248

No. of Issues: _____
× $8.00/issue $ _____
WA Residents add 8.6% tax: $ _____
Total in U.S. Funds: $ _____

Method of Payment
❒ Check ❒ Money Order ❒ Mastercard ❒ Visa

Card No.: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Price includes postage and handling. Issues will be shipped via regular mail. Please allow 6–8 weeks for delivery.

The "Out of Character" column is one of my favorite additions from your old format, as well as the "Knights of the Dinner Table" comic. Both sections are very enjoyable and useful (even KODT), as they tackle issues that we come across all the time in my group. The articles vary in their usefulness to me, but that is to be expected, and I do think that 95% of them are very well done, as are all of your short stories.

One negative criticism: I believe the "Wyrms" series may have run its course, at least for monthly publication. It is a good series, and Mr. Greenwood does a very good job with it, but I think we need a break.

Lastly, I think the "Dragon Ecology" section is very good. The extra information it provides is priceless to those of us who often like to add twists to old favorites on the fly and the stories that go along with them are usually just a bonus. Anyway, three cheers for you all. This is my favorite publication, and I will continue to purchase it as I have for quite some time.

J. Healey
Malden, MA

As recently hinted, "Wyrms of the North" will have run its course by early next summer, and then Ed's on to another series. Considering the letters we've been receiving, he's on exactly the right track. But just to be sure, he has a request for all readers:

"As Volo is unleashed on the Realms once more, running hard and in disguise to avoid the wrath of mages who remain less than pleased by a certain Guide to All Things Magical, *Elminster promises to correct the more egregious errors, as usual. In the interests of upsetting the fewest Faerûnians, however, we'd like to—er—*aim *Volo at the Realms rather than just letting him wander. Therefore, please let us know: What places or things would you like Volo to explore, and what are the most important or useful facts or details you'd like to know about them? Laeral has promised to comment when the 'two boys get out of hand…'"*

More Casting About

In issue #253 Steven Poer brought up the idea of making a TSR movie. I think that Steven made a good choice with the DRAGONLANCE® trilogy, but I have few suggestions for the cast.

Tanis Half-Elven: While Bruce Willis is a good choice, I think Mel Gibson would fit the part better.

Tasslehoff: Michael J. Fox? While I have to agree about the "curious prankster" part, I think that we should bring back Warwick Davis (who played the title role in *Willow*).

Kitiara: Cindy Crawford doesn't look like the type to run people through, but Lucy Lawless has lots of practice in that area.

Flint: Danny DeVito would be perfect.

Fizban: I think Mel Brooks would be a mistake; however, Christopher Lloyd would make a very good "fuddled wizard."

I hope that you will seriously consider making a TSR movie whichever series it's based on.

Also, in "With a Twist" James Wyatt mentioned the *World Builder's Guidebook*. I was wondering where I might get a copy and who wrote it.

Russell Thrailkill
Address Withheld

The World Builder's Guidebook *(TSR #9532) is a campaign accessory by Rich Baker. You might also be interested in Bruce Cordell's* Dungeon Builder's Guidebook *(TSR #9556) You should be able to find both in your local game or book store.*

After reading the "Casting Call" letter from Steven Poer, I simply had to write. I wholeheartedly agree that *The Chronicles* would make a super movie or, better yet, a television mini-series.

However, my casting choices would be different from Steven's. Those I would choose differently:

Tasselhoff: Johnathan Taylor Thomas, from *Home Improvement*.

Sturm: Alexander Siddig, from *Deep Space Nine*.

Raistlin: Jason Carter, from *Babylon Five*.

Gilthanas: Robert Duncan McNeil, from *Voyager*.

With the popularity of *Xena* and *Hercules* as television series and the well-received mini-series *Merlin*, I agree with Steven that it is time for a DRAGONLANCE production.

Karen Kay Wegner
Helena, MT

Playing With Miniatures

Our AD&D group, the Loremasters, has always found enjoyment in collecting vast arrays of PC and monster miniatures for use at our table. I print floor plans from my computer of everything from taverns to temples

Pop-up town.

and dungeon rooms. We collect the old TSR adventure fold-up sets, including castle walls, buildings, etc. Every convention is a search for a new, interesting terrain feature like cliffs or a river. We have a few folks who make their own terrain. For a while, we asked ourselves the same question posed in the November "WYRM'S TURN™": Does all this scenery take away from imagination?

Every time the DM reaches for terrain, does that mean the players should expect a combat encounter? Regardless, people are entertained by the visuals, but all eyes come to the

Frost giant fight.

DM when descriptions of the scene unfold. Sure, a miniature can be placed on its side in a combat when it perishes, but that's an afterthought to descriptive references. Our group feels the miniatures promote roleplaying and free the imagination from keeping track of exactly where every friend and foe is standing.

Recently, the PCs met a giant outside his lair in a *DUNGEON Adventures* module. The cave setup in "Frost Giant Fight" was designed by a couple of my players. The miniatures were painted by my wife, and the mats are from Chessex. All the houses are from the GREYHAWK® setting's "Falcon" trilogy.

The copse of trees in the picture "Outside The Cave" was homemade. As you can see, the terrain doesn't have to win awards, but it's better than hunks of uncolored cardboard, too. It sets the scene and there's no arguments about what is what! We use strips of felt cut the same width end to end to simulate a trail or road.

Outside the cave.

I think the return of a miniatures column would be great, especially if it had hints on actually using them in play and covering the spectrum of terrain, buildings, and so forth, besides just the little pewter folks.

Jeff Ibach
Lawrenceville, NJ

People who send us letters often get their wishes. Starting next issue, "Role Models" joins the ranks of our regular columns, offering tips on using miniatures. It starts off with the simplest, least expensive way to add figures to the game. Gradually, it'll tackle slightly more challenging elements, like building terrain and even customizing figures. It'll be a great way for those who haven't used miniatures before to get started.

The Loremasters can't be the only group who use miniatures in the game—and they can't be the only ones who've named themselves. Tell us about your gaming group, and maybe we'll grant one of your wishes.

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. You must include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed (we won't print a letter sent anonymously), but we'll withhold your name or print your full address if you so request.

What are the three best spells (Wizard and Priest) in the *Player's Handbook*? Why are they best?

Weenie Wizards

Has anyone noticed how fatally weak Wizards are? It is not possible to play a Wizard from 1st level and have him reach 18th level unless the DM fudges rolls or allows easy access to *raise dead* spells.

Wizards need the greatest amount of experience, compared to the other classes, to advance in level. Keep in mind that to gain this experience, they must be active and participating in group efforts. (Sorry bud, casting your *light* spell and hiding at the back isn't putting you on the fast track for level advancement!)

To gain all this experience, Wizards have the least hit points (d4) and starting money (4d10), no armor, few weapons, poor THAC0, and only one spell. In short, they are weak, poor, unarmored, under-armed, inadequate combatants, and they have only one spell to cast, providing they don't get hit before it goes off. This is assuming one of the few spells they get at 1st level is useful in combat.

These facts are obvious. However, let us imagine that, through clever play and some favoritism, a player finally somehow reaches a level where he can do what Wizards are renowned for … creating magical items!

The financial cost is enormous. The spells required are not guaranteed to work. If they do work, you lose your life at the rate of 1 point of Constitution per *permanency* spell. Your reward is a pittance of experience points and, if you're lucky, some fame. (Here is the sword of Poindexter the Lucky-to-be-alive!)

Nobody in our group plays a single-classed Wizard anymore—at least not for long, as they always die! Can this class be salvaged in a 3rd Edition? Are multi-class Mages the answer? What do others think? Are Wizards weenies?

Dennis R. Rose
Saskatoon, Canada

Monks With Class

For a 3rd Edition of the AD&D® game, I would like to see the return of the Monk as a character class and not as a kit, as in the 1st Edition. Before you stop reading and jump to the conclusion that Monks from the 1st Edition are too tough, let me assure you that, in the hands of a competent DM, they aren't.

For a start, with the ability scores needed, few characters make it into the class. They don't gain any real power until they reach about 9th level, and their life expectancy below 9th level is not good. Also, they have to be Lawful. Any change results in the loss of all abilities—the Monk becomes a 1st-level character of a different class with no chance to regain their lost abilities. Compare this to the other classes with strict Alignment requirements, such as Paladins and Rangers. Both become fighters of the same level they had attained in their earlier class if their alignment changes, and they can redeem their lost abilities through noble deeds.

Monks have a Mage's hit points (d4) although they do get 2 HD at 1st level. Their maximum adjustment for Constitution is 2, as they are not true Fighters, so a 17th-level Monk, who serves the party primarily as a melee fighter, has an average of 45 hp, whereas a Fighter of the same level has an average of 75 hp plus any Constitution bonuses. Monks also fight on the Thieves' combat table, third in combat rankings. Once again, a class whose primary role in melee combat comes out noticeably inferior to most of the classes.

So, they have a combat bonus of ½ point of damage per level. This may seem powerful, but at 16th level, when they do +8 damage with a weapon, they still have only one attack per round. A 16th-level Warrior without specialization gets two attacks per round; with exceptional Strength, he gets a bonus of +2 to +6. With two attacks, that makes it +4 to +12. So the Monk's +8 is hardly out of proportion.

It is commonly agreed that at high levels, Monks fight better with their bare hands. At 17th level, they have four attacks per round with their hands, and each attack does 8–32 points of damage. This ability seems powerful, but is it? With their bare hands, Monks can't attack creatures hit only by magical weapons. Also, if you use the weapon-type attack adjustment, their bonus disappears. To hit AC 2 (i.e., platemail and shield), they are at a –7 penalty. Make it a suit of *platemail* +2 and a 16th-level Monk needs a 21 to hit AC 0 (THAC0 14 with the adjustment of –7), so even with four attacks, he can't hit. In comparison, a 16th-level Fighter with a *longsword* +2 needs a 6 to hit AC 0 (THAC0 6, –2 for using a longsword against platemail and shield, and a +2 from the sword's enchantment). Without Strength modifiers or specialization, he needs a 6 and has two attacks. As a second example, consider someone in chainmail and shield (AC 4) adjusted by –2 for Dexterity, which makes a final AC of 2. A Monk needs a 17 to hit in this case (THAC0 14 – 3 penalty for bare hand attack against

chainmail). With four attacks per round, the law of averages says he hits each round doing an average of 20 points of damage. The 16th-level Fighter in the same situation needs a 3 to hit AC 2 (THAC0 5 – 2 for the sword's enchantment). With two attacks per round and needing only a 3 to hit, the Fighter hits twice during nearly every round and causes an average of 7.5 points of damage—again without Strength or specialization bonuses.

The Monk's ability to stun and kill is often criticized as too powerful. To stun an opponent, a Monk needs to roll 5 higher than his chance to hit. Using the above examples, it is clear that this only happens against very weak opponents—opponents that a high-level Fighter would have an equally easy time incapacitating.

The ability to dodge missiles is useful, but with saving throws vs. petrification at 16th-level being 9, it is only 60% reliable. Also, if a Mage wanted to use *fireball* on a Monk, he wouldn't aim it at the Monk so he could dodge; instead, he'd aim it at the floor near the Monk's feet, ensuring that the Monk would be in the blast radius.

Monks have some Thief abilities. Lawful Good Monks opening locks for a Good-aligned party are much more believable than some patched together justification for a Good-aligned Thief or a Rogue with sticky fingers. If you took a Monk into the dungeon, at least you would leave the dungeon with everything still in your pockets.

Another major benefit is their ability to fall. If they can keep in contact with a wall, at high levels they can fall any distance. This problem was overcome in my games by the invention of the "Monk Pit." It starts as a normal pit, but as it gets deeper, the walls are farther and farther apart, like an inverted funnel. This serves a dual purpose in that the Monks can't reach the walls and more things in the pit can be hidden from prying eyes.

Armor: The Monk has a gradually lower AC, but he can't wear armor and receives no Dexterity adjustment. Even though his AC can reach –3, with the weapon against armor rules he is treated as AC 10, meaning most weapons receive +2 to hit him. Without any adjustments for magic or Strength, a 16th-level Warrior needs 9 to hit AC –3. With the +2 adjustment, he only needs a 7, and with the Monk's average hit points only being a 45, the Warrior dressed in platemail will make short work of our particular Monk.

The *speak with animals* and *speak with plants* abilities can be useful, but they actually aren't that powerful. The same can be said of masking the mind to ESP. Monks are Lawful, so their actions are always going to be logical and not Chaotic, so do you really need to read their minds?

While 5th-level Monks, like Paladins, are not affected by disease, by then a Cleric can cast *cure disease* anyway.

MONKS ... SEEM POWERFUL, but put one against an equally experienced, armored, and specialized fighter, and I know which one I would back.

They can also *feign death*, but this is mostly a defensive ability. With their low hit points and AC, they need something to help them survive.

At 9th level, *charm* and similar spells have only a 50% chance of success. Elves have this ability from 1st level.

Ability H, telepathic and Mindblast attacks: This ability is useful only if you use psionics. I don't believe they are needed, so I don't use them, making this power useless.

A Monk's most useful ability, in my mind, is the immunity to poisons gained at 11th level. At that level, though, Warriors and Priests have a better than 50% chance of making the appropriate saving throw. Unless you are using sudden death poisons, all poison causes is damage. As previously stated, Monks don't have many hit points.

The ability that everyone says is too powerful is the quivering palm. I don't deny that this power is effective, but it can be used only once a week, and the Monk must hit within three rounds. If the opposition is in any armor better than studded leather, forget it. The chances to hit are so low the ability is most likely lost. Also, anyone within 90 hit points or more is safe, as Monks with average hit points can't affect higher hit point totals. Those most vulnerable to a Monk's quivering palm are high-level Mages, but who in his right mind would want to cross a high-level Mage?

Lastly, to advance further than 8th level, a Monk must defeat another Monk of the same level, since there may only be one Monk of each level from 9th to 17th. So, in the middle of an adventure the Monk declares he is off to fight his required duel. He'll catch up in a couple of weeks, possibly a level higher, possibly not!

In summary, when you look at Monks, with four attacks per round, causing 8d4 points of damage, and delivering the quivering palm, they seem powerful, but put one against an equally experienced, armored, and specialized Fighter, and I know which one I would back.

The inclusion of the Monk as a character class in the 3rd Edition would give players a wider selection to choose from, and anyway, having read this, how many people would want to play one?

Kev Smith
South Glamorgan, U.K.

Rapier Wit

Having read Adam Donaldson's letter "the best weapons" (in issue #249), I feel it deserves a response. He mentions the good old catch-all bastard sword, immensely popular in its day, as being the first and last choice for most players as a basic hand weapon and an absence of others, such as spears. Why were certain weapons more popular at various times?

The answer probably lies in the humble rapier. This sword lacks the hacking power of its larger predecessors, relying on slashing and piercing damage and incapable of piercing plate. Why was such a weapon developed when far

more damaging weapons were already in existence? The answer is simple: armor.

With the advent of effective gunpowder weapons, the use of brilliantly manufactured plate armor became more or less obsolete, and lighter swords that gave the benefit of speed and lightness (useful during prolonged battles) became more common.

Similarly, it can be argued that the heavier weapons were developed to combat advances in armor. Many weapons were developed to deal with particular types of armor. The bodkin arrow and the crossbow bolt were effective at springing open mail links. The mace was quite capable of shattering bones through mail as well as hammering the links into the flesh of the person beneath. (Padded armor jacks of leather or cloth helped take care of this.) Warhammers (not the fantasy version with the big block of stone, but the medieval version with a meat tenderizer on the front and a bullet-shaped spike on the back) were capable of punching straight through plate armor (particularly helmets) with ease or inflicting crushing blows on less well-armored opponents. The halberd, the most successful infantry weapon for several centuries, was a combination weapon with a spearlike spike protruding from the end, either a spike (for piercing plate) or a meat tenderizer on the back, and a large axe head on the front. These were brought to bear by swinging the weapon over the head and bringing it down on your opponent, the force of which would be easily capable of fracturing the skull, even with a helmet, if well landed.

A further note on missile weapons and the Longbow vs. Crossbow debate. Which was the most powerful? Well, with the development of the steel crossbow, there is no contest. "Surely this terrible weapon will bring an end to all wars," or so the Pope believed (forgive me for not remembering which one). This weapon (and I have this on good authority) is capable of putting a bolt an inch deep into solid stone; its penetrating power is massive. The only reason that the longbow held out against it was largely the firing rate. These crossbows could only be loaded with a winch affair attached to the firer's end, and loading was slow—about three or four times a minute. The loading mechanism has been known to shatter under the strain, rendering it useless until repaired (a helpful fact for DMs). The only other advantage of crossbows is that they fire directly at the target, so they are easily used by anyone without the dedicated hours of practice required for the longbow. Compared to this, the longbow, with a bodkin arrow (see below), was still capable of punching through plate armor from at least 200 yards away. Longbows could be fired up to eighteen times a minute with enough accuracy to hit a target no larger than a saucer at about 20 yards (I've seen it done). This is four and a half times faster than the steel crossbow.

However, one thing needs to be remembered: There is a large difference between penetrating power and actual damage. For example, the bodkin arrow (a narrow head without barbs, only fractionally thicker than the shaft) was better at penetrating armor than a barbed arrow but did less damage. (Keep them for the knights.) You're never going to cut someone's head off with a mace, but you might with a longsword, unless they are wearing a plate gorget. The trick, in game terms, is to differentiate between the penetrating damage (daggers are good for this) and the inflicted damage (daggers aren't so good at this) of a weapon versus the effectiveness of the armor against particular types of damage. For example, a padded leather jack is good against maces, flails, hammers, and the like, but less so against spears, arrows, lances, etc. Also, plate armor is all very well, but knights had to keep taking water to avoid passing out from the heat.

My final point on armor is this advice: Use a dagger and look for the gaps. In plate armor, there are plenty (eye slits, under the arms, often the base of the skull); a good number of knights were dispatched in this manner by groups of lighter and faster men-at-arms.

Finally, you might consider—if you want to take it this far—that hitting mail-clad opponents repeatedly with a sword has an adverse effect on the sharpness, and therefore effectiveness, of a blade's cutting edge. On the other hand, taking a few too many hits from a warhammer leaves your nice, shiny breastplate resembling little more than an oddly shaped colander. Keep those whetstones handy, and don't neglect the nice, shiny mail coat that dead orc is wearing.

Introducing all this to your games may take less work than you think. Start by considering the weapons and armor your players already have. Let them experience the shortcomings of their preferred choice, then develop new rules as new equipment is chosen and used. Soon you'll find that not only will your players be keen to pick up weapons for all seasons as well as varying their armor, but the creatures and adversaries they encounter will, as well.

Mark Burdett
West Midlands, England

WHY WERE CERTAIN WEAPONS more popular at various times?

Nonstandard PC Races

My gaming group formed almost twenty years ago, and I joined it eight years ago. We've all played nonstandard characters at one time or another.

About twelve to thirteen years ago, our first centaur PC showed up. He was given pluses to his normal dice roll for Strength due to his race. Also, he was an herbivore and didn't like ale, which meant that we never met him at a tavern, nor could we keep up with him on the open plains, unless we had horses.

About ten years ago, our first drow PC arrived. He was a little unpredictable, and sometimes he forgot to take prisoners when we were gathering intelligence, but his deftness and skill with a blade came in handy.

When I joined the group, the campaign was at a high level; most PCs were 18th–22nd level and had been in the campaign for four to six years or more. I came in as a custom character, a Kzin.

DISCOVER THE SOURCE

... of Destiny

The Soulforge
Margaret Weis
The Raistlin Chronicles, Volume I
TSR# 21314
ISBN# 0-7869-1314-2
Available January

Margaret Weis's riveting novel reveals the early years of Raistlin, greatest archmage of Krynn, and the crucible that shaped and twisted his spirit and body. First time in paperback, including a new introduction by Margaret Weis.

DRAGONLANCE

... of Magic

The Silver Stair
Jean Rabe
Bridges of Time Series
TSR# 21315
ISBN# 0-7869-1315-0
Available January

Amid the wreckage of the Chaos War, a new kind of magic arises on Krynn—but does it offer hope or doom? Jean Rabe's compelling novel portrays the foundation of the Citadel of Light and its champion, Goldmoon, Hero of the Lance.

TSR

... of Fate

The Puppet King
Douglas Niles
The Chaos War Series
TSR# 21324
ISBN# 0-7869-1324-X
Available February

As war and destruction spread across Ansalon, the elven ruler Gilthas must make a fateful choice. Will he lead his people to triumph or despair?

Visit our website at <www.tsr.com>.
Questions? Call (800) 324-6496

Dragonlance, TSR, and related logos are registered trademarks of TSR, Inc. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©1996 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

This is a catlike biped borrowed from Pournelle and Niven's books. We gave him strength, agility, fast reflexes, and a short temper. His name is Hunter; his motto, "Kill and Eat."

The bottom line is simple: The existing rules (I read these as guidelines) leave lots of room for customization. The DM and players talk it out, then agree on details. Then we play and have fun. Fun is the key: action, story, character development, risk—all within an epic land of wonder.

I don't need any special rules from TSR for custom PCs, but others would likely enjoy them. If people aren't playing with nonstandard PCs, I think they should try it. You should include them if you make any changes to AD&D. For me, however, I think a 3rd Edition is unneeded. Whether I play or DM, I can edit and customize on the fly, as can the others in our group.

Steve Rees
Address Withheld

New Initiative

I like the AD&D system the way it is in many ways. Some rules have their weak points, but often they are vital. If you can't make any better ones, the old rules should stay right where they are.

There is one thing I would like to see changed: the initiative system. In AD&D, a dagger has an initiative modifier of +2 and a battle axe a modifier of +8. That means that you can attack faster with a dagger. If you attack faster, you should have more attacks. The AD&D game needs a system in which fast weapons allow more attacks and slower weapons allow fewer.

I have an idea how to improve initiative. Most computer-RPGs don't use a turn-based system, but a realtime combat system instead. It is possible to create realtime combat rules for AD&D. Suppose that you roll your initiative in seconds; after you attack, you roll initiative again and add that number to the number you rolled the first time to determine when you attack again. Thus, your first attack might take place 6 seconds after combat starts, and it could take hundreds of seconds before combat ends.

"Isn't that a lot of calculating?" said my friends, when I proposed this system. My experience is that you get used to it quite quickly. After half an hour, my players and I were running a totally smooth realtime battle.

If you want to make it work, you'll need to modify the weapon speeds. You could add ten to all of them, for example. I've made some improvised rules for weapon and spellcasting initiative modifiers, too.

Derek Groen
Amsterdam, Holland

FREE - Urth CD-ROM Game - FREE

Inventory Clearance

Order Now - a $35 value - yours FREE

Have we gone Crazy ?

Nope, but you must be if you pass this up. Our new games are being released.

We need to clear our inventory ASAP.

So, if you cover the shipping and handeling charges (only $ 9), we will give you the boxed Collector edition for FREE.

Website: WWW.DRAGONMM.COM

Urth
Role Playing Campaign

To order a CD-ROM
send $ 9 for shipping to:

Dragon Multimedia
PO Box 230184
Graves End Station
Brooklyn, NY
11223

How to get the FREE Urth CD-ROM

1) Order immediately, today - NOW !!!
2) Send us your name and address
3) Include $ 9 for shipping & handeling (Heck, we're giving it to you FREE)

Includes Campaign & Module !!!

* 1,500 Pages
* 250 Color Maps
* 100 Battle Maps
* 70 Countries
* 125 Color Portraits
* plus sound effects & music

Jenny wants to run a 7th-level

half-elf fighter/thief/mage.

Jenny's game starts in 15 minutes.

Jenny plays a pre-made cleric.

Not anymore...

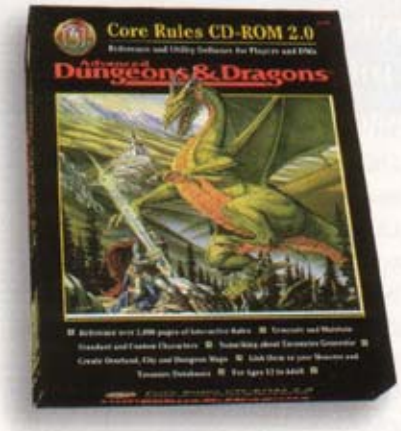
You love to play the AD&D® game.

But generating the perfect character can take a lot of time.

AD&D Core Rules CD-ROM 2.0 changes that.

You still do the fun stuff, but the program crunches the numbers. And with the PLAYER'S OPTION® books integrated into the program, you don't lose any complexity.

Standard AD&D rules are built in, but the program can also handle your house rules.



Plus, with the new utility from the makers of CAMPAIGN CARTOGRAPHER®, you can easily produce high-quality city, dungeon, and over-land maps.

It's the perfect AD&D tool for anyone that happens to have the burden of a life away from the campaign. Watch for it on shelves this October and go to **www.tsr.com/cr2** for information and valuable offers.

Advanced Dungeons&Dragons® Game

AD&D® Core Rules CD-ROM 2.0

Less work. More play.

Available wherever software or AD&D products are sold.

For a store near you check out **http://locator.wizards.com**

Customer Service: (800) 324-6496 • **www.tsr.com**

Forgotten Realms is a registered trademark and the Forgotten Realms logo and Dungeons & Dragons are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. unless otherwise noted. ©1998 TSR, Inc. All rights reserved. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Dungeoncraft

Need Help?

Send your questions and anecdotes about running AD&D game adventures to:

"Dungeoncraft"
% *Dragon Magazine*
1801 Lind Avenue S.W.
Renton, WA 98055

Send email to
dmail@wizards.com

By Ray Winninger

The Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® (AD&D) game is a game of the imagination. It's this characteristic more than any other that sets AD&D apart from chess, checkers, charades, poker, *Monopoly*, *Chutes and Ladders*, *Space Invaders*, and just about any other game that comes to mind. All of these other games are defined by their rules—pass "Go" to collect $200, a flush beats a straight, and so forth. The AD&D game, on the other hand, doesn't really have any rules. The *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master® Guide* aren't full of rules in the conventional sense—they're more like suggestions. AD&D players are expected to take these suggestions and use them to create their own games ideally suited to their own tastes.

A GOOD DM is a writer, actor, game designer, storyteller, and referee all rolled into one.

As a result, each AD&D session can be a unique and rewarding experience. It isn't just a game; it's an educational experience, a social event, and an outlet for creative energy. Because there are no absolute rules to fall back on, however, the AD&D game is only as much fun as the players can make it. A game of the imagination isn't very interesting unless the players are inventive. As both referee and guardian of the game world, much of this creative burden rests squarely on the shoulders of the Dungeon Master (DM). Good DMing is the key to a rewarding AD&D campaign. A good DM can make the most mundane adventures come to life, while all the rulebooks and dice in the world can't save the ailing campaign of a poor DM.

A good DM is a writer, actor, game designer, storyteller, and referee all rolled into one. Taking on all these roles is not easy; effective DMing is more art than science. Beginning with this issue, *Dragon® Magazine* devotes a few pages each month to exploring the art of Dungeoncraft. In the months ahead, you'll have an opportunity to peek behind the scenes as I prepare and run a complete AD&D campaign. Along the way, I'll discuss how I designed and ran various aspects of the campaign. I'll also give you tips for creating or improving your own campaigns and for handling special situations that arise during play. Future installments of this column will cover topics ranging from worldbuilding and character creation to dungeon design and playing effective NPCs.

Although "Dungeoncraft" is an obvious starting point for beginners running their first games, experienced dungeon-crawlers should find plenty of interesting material in these pages as well. Along the way, you're bound to encounter some new rules, techniques, and tricks to help you spice up even a long-running campaign. Between "Dungeoncraft," the monthly "Sage Advice" rules column, and the occasional "Dungeon Mastery" articles on special topics related to DMing, each issue of *Dragon Magazine* should provide just about any DM with plenty of food for thought.

"Dungeoncraft" will include advice on how to handle the sticky situations that arise in your own games. Need advice on how to deal with a "difficult" player? Wondering how much treasure to place in your dungeons? Want to know how to run a doppleganger effectively? If so, drop me a line at the address above.

With all that out of the way, we can move on to this month's topic: getting started. A good DM knows that lots of prep time is necessary before building a new campaign. There are maps to draw, stories to write, characters to create, and dungeons to stock. Because the many tasks that must be completed before beginning play are obviously interconnected, it's sometimes difficult to decide where to begin.

Begin by asking yourself a few key questions. Although a couple of these queries might sound a bit trite, having clear answers in mind for each of them up front is bound to save you lots of time and headaches later. In order, the key questions are:

1. Should I DM?

Running your own AD&D campaign can be incredibly rewarding. In essence, you get to create an entire world, write its history, populate it as you see fit, and craft your own legends. What's more, if your campaign is effective, you might experience the unique satisfaction of creating something that eventually attains a depth and a life of its own. Some AD&D campaigns have run for twenty years or more and have generated enough tales to fill several volumes. On the other hand, you should recognize that DMing isn't a responsibility to be assumed lightly. Before you begin, you should take some time to make sure that you're ready to start a game.

DMs face two real problems. The first is a lack of time. While it's certainly enjoyable work, preparing and running an AD&D campaign is just that—*work*. In the early going, you should count on spending three to four hours per week (in addition to actual playing time) preparing adventures, drawing maps, and adding little details to your setting. If you don't have the time to spend, don't even try to run the game; you'll only frustrate your players. You can significantly decrease prep time by using published adventures and settings, but as a practical rule, you're likely to get only as much out of these products as you're willing to put into them. Never try to run a published adventure without reading it thoroughly prior to play.

The second problem facing DMs is a lack of restraint. If you think you'd rather be a player, don't DM. Part of the DM's job is to let the players grab center stage. A good DM always gives the players the last word and lets them decide what happens next. While this advice might sound straightforward, losing sight of it has been the downfall of many a campaign. Once play begins, you're going to have to resist the urge to use favorite NPCs to steal the spotlight from the players. You'll also need to keep an open mind about the outcome of the adventures and storylines you create lest you steer the players toward the endings you favor. Ultimately, the stories arising from your campaign belong to the players. If you have a problem with that, let someone else run the game.

"False starts" can waste a lot of time (yours and the players') and they inevitably make it even harder to set up a viable game later.

2. How Many Players Do I Want? Where Will I Find Them?

Unlike a lot of newer roleplaying games, AD&D works best with a lot of players. Think of the ideal AD&D adventuring party—you need at least a couple of fighters to engage monsters and protect the weaker adventurers in combat, a cleric to cast healing spells, a thief to deal with tricks and traps, and a wizard or two to decipher magical clues and provide an extra punch in important battles. If any of these key roles aren't filled, the players are bound to run into trouble; many AD&D supplements were designed under the assumption that all these skills would be available to the players' party. Similarly, it's nice if one or two of the players choose to play nonhuman races, giving the party even more capabilities and flexibility with regards to language, etc. Because players are free to choose any role they wish, it's wise to plan on four or more players to guarantee a well-balanced party. If your players are willing to give up some of their options while creating their characters, you might get away with only four or five players (more on this in a later installment devoted to character creation). Playing with fewer than four players is likely to prove difficult in all but the most unusual campaigns.

On the upper end, you'll want to limit yourself to eight or ten players as a general rule. With more than ten players, it's easy to lose control of the game. For similar reasons, less-experienced DMs might want to limit themselves to six or seven players for the time being; you can always add more later. In any case, since you should always have enough room at the game table(s) to comfortably accommodate all players, it's far more likely that the real limit on the number of players proves to be a function of the space available.

If you don't know enough potential players to fill all the slots you have in mind, there are plenty of ways to locate new players. Find out if any local colleges have a gaming club (most do). Attend a local gaming convention and play in an AD&D tournament. Check with the retailers who sell AD&D products in your area to see if any of them will allow you to post a "players wanted" notice in their shops. You can also post notices in appropriate places on the Internet. The social element is one of the characteristics that makes AD&D such a great game; over the years, thousands of lifelong friendships have formed over the gaming table.

Ray's AD&D Campaign Starter Package

Item	Price
Player's Handbook (TSR Stock #2159)	$29.95
Dungeon Master® Guide (TSR Stock #2160)	$24.95
Monstrous Manual™ book (TSR Stock #2140)	$29.95
DM's Screen (TSR Stock #9512)	$9.95
Character Record Sheets (TSR Stock #9264)	$9.95

3. How Often Should We Play?

How often you expect to play also affects all sorts of DM decisions. Effective pacing is one of the most important attributes of a successful AD&D campaign, and only by understanding how often you expect to play can you take steps to pace your campaign so that events unfold in an appropriate time frame.

If at all possible, try to play at a regular time, once per week. More often than once per week is going to force you to spend an extraordinary amount of free time preparing adventures and materials. Unless you have this much time to spend, you're likely to burn out before your campaign really gets off the ground. Playing less frequently than once per week, on the other hand, makes it difficult for the players to keep the details of the game fresh in their mind. You'll also find that the less frequently you play, the more likely it is that some of your key players will miss game sessions. The more frequent and regular your game times, the easier it will be for the players to remember them and plan accordingly.

If you can't play once per week, you might get away with any regular interval up to once per month. In this event, it's important to schedule each game session as long in advance as possible and to take careful notes during each session, so you can refresh the players' memories of the game situation at the start of the next session.

Note that for now, you need only estimate how often you expect to play on average. Once things get going, you might play slightly more or less often in certain situations depending on how the game progresses. To finish off a particularly climactic storyline, for instance, you might want to schedule an extra session. Similarly, after a lengthy storyline comes to a close, you might take a week off, giving you extra time to prepare the next set of adventures.

TO RUN YOUR OWN AD&D CAMPAIGN, I recommend beginning with just five items ...

4. What Rulebooks and Accessories Will I Need?

I'm going to assume that you've played the AD&D game before and know that you're interested in continuing. If you haven't played the AD&D game before, your best bet is to pick up the *D&D Game Fast-Play Rules* or the *Introduction to Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* boxed set and follow the instructions therein to run a few sample games. This should give you a nice opportunity to get your feet wet and to decide whether or not you're interested in investing further time and money. Once you're ready to create your own adventures and start a full-blown campaign, you can follow the advice below.

To run your own AD&D campaign, I recommend beginning with just five items: the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master Guide*, *Monstrous Manual™* book, a *DM's Screen*, and a set of *AD&D Character Record Sheets*. All together, these items add up to roughly a $100 investment. Yes, that's a lot of money, but you don't have to spend it all at once. Start by purchasing the *Player's Handbook* and take time to read and absorb it fully. Then purchase the *Dungeon Master Guide* and completely peruse it before moving on to the *Monstrous Manual* book. In this fashion, you can spread the investment over several months, while simultaneously ensuring that you're not trying to tackle too much material at a time. If the cost is still a problem, see if your players might be interested in contributing to the cost of the rulebooks.

The ***Player's Handbook*** (*PH*) contains the basic rules for creating characters and handling combats, as well as complete descriptions of all the game's basic magic spells. Although the *PH* is primarily for players, as DM, you'll find it an essential part of your library as well. You'll use its rules for creating the NPCs who populate your campaign setting, and you'll need its spell descriptions to create tricks and traps and to conduct play.

The ***Dungeon Master Guide*** (*DMG*) reiterates the rules for combat, includes lots of indispensable rules for running campaigns, and offers complete descriptions of all the game's basic magical items. The *DMG* will prove extremely useful while you're creating adventures and during play itself.

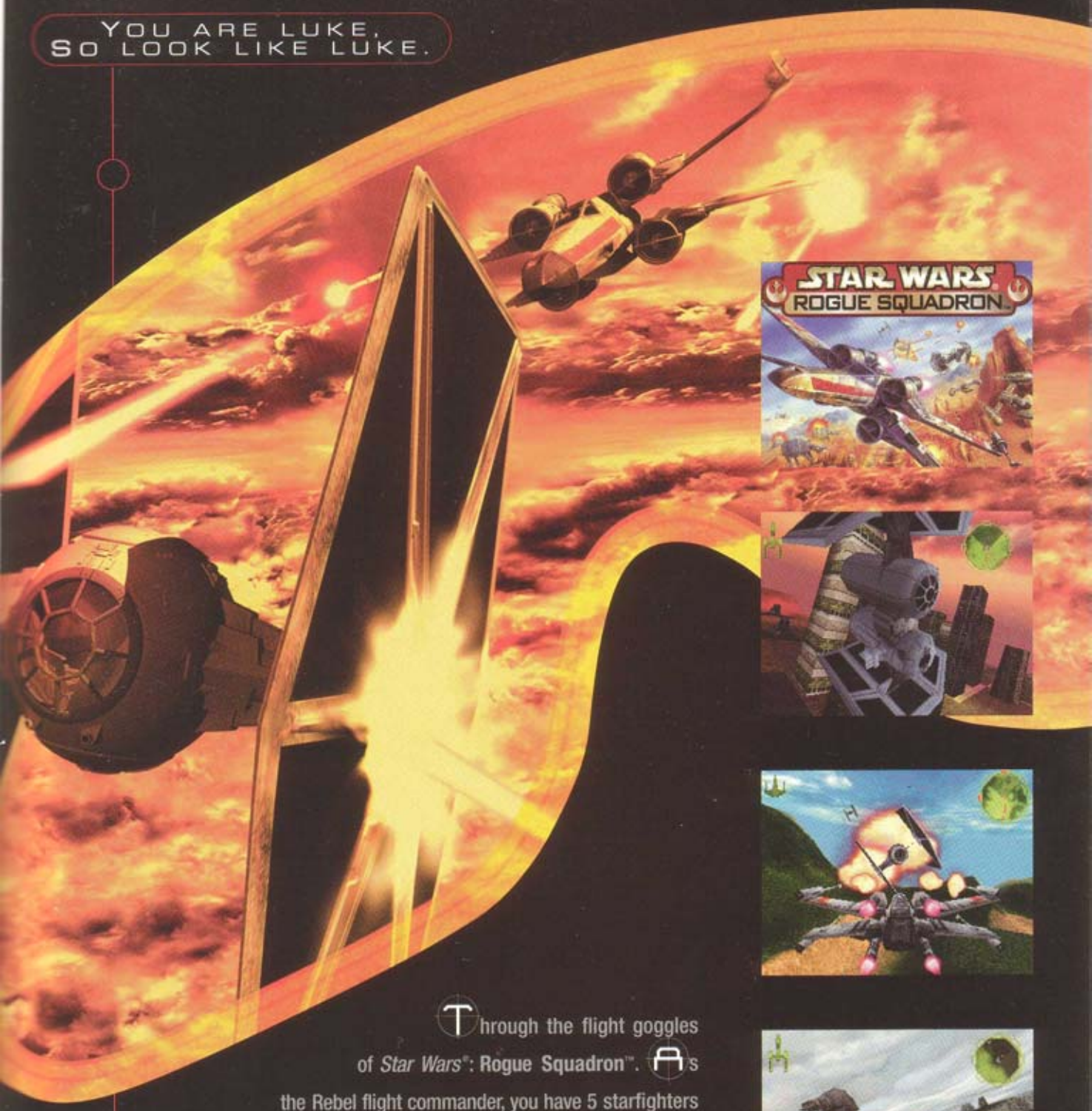
The ***Monstrous Manual*** is a complete listing of all the statistics for the monsters inhabiting the average AD&D game world. While it's possible to begin play without the *MM* (particularly if you plan to kick off your campaign with published adventures), I recommend buying it for three reasons. First, the *Monstrous Manual* includes a useful illustration of each of its creatures. These illustrations make it much easier to describe the beasts to your players. Second, the monster entries include lots of information that is omitted from the capsule monster descriptions found in published adventures, and this missing information (ecology, motivation, feeding habits and so forth) is often the key

Editor's Economy Package

If you want to to make a smaller initial investment, all you *really* need to start your own AD&D campaign are:

Item	Price
Player's Handbook	$29.95
Any Issue of *Dungeon® Adventures*	$4.95

YOU ARE LUKE.
SO LOOK LIKE LUKE.



Through the flight goggles of *Star Wars*®: **Rogue Squadron**™. As the Rebel flight commander, you have 5 starfighters to fly, 15 planets to save from destruction, and a hangar full of proton torpedoes, cluster missiles and laser cannons all at your fingertips. Now go blow the evil Empire to bits. Only you can save the galaxy on N64®. Want even more hyperspace? Then boost your system with the N64 Expansion Pak™ for supercharged graphics.

EXPANSION PAK Enhanced

GET N64

OR GET OUT™

© Lucasfilm Ltd & ™. All rights reserved. Used under authorization.
The "N" Logo is a trademark of Nintendo of America Inc. ©1998 Nintendo of America Inc. www.nintendo.com
Game, System and Expansion Pak sold separately.

to bringing the creature to life. Lastly, perhaps more than any other AD&D accessory, the *Monstrous Manual* book is a rich font of ideas. Each of its 350-odd creatures is an adventure waiting to happen; just a quick flip through its pages is bound to plant a few seeds for interesting encounters, obstacles, and storylines. Once play begins, you'll quickly realize that you can use every idea you can get your hands on.

AD&D Character Record Sheets are blank forms your players can use to keep track of their character's statistics, hit points, magical items, etc. While the sheets aren't strictly necessary, I recommend that you pick up a set and ask your players to use them. Using well-organized character sheets like these saves lots of time during play. Once they see how useful the sheets are, players might want to buy their own.

The AD&D DM's Screen is a card-stock screen you can stand up at your position at the game table and use to conceal your notes and dice rolls from the players. Printed on the inside of the screen, you'll find all the most frequently used game charts and lists, making it unnecessary to waste time flipping though the rulebooks to locate this information during play. While an enterprising craftsman can easily photocopy a few charts from the rulebooks and create his or her own screen out of poster board, the official screen isn't terribly expensive. In later installments, I'll explore some specific techniques you can use in conjunction with the a screen to add some spice to your games.

Other Books and Items

Beginners are often confused by the staggering variety of available AD&D products. For now, it's best to ignore all those other products. You won't need them to get your campaign up and running. In later installments I'll explore a wide range of available products and discuss ways in which you might gradually introduce new material to add variety to your campaign.

If you're a more experienced DM and plan to use additional material right from the start (perhaps something from the Player's Option® or Complete Handbook series), it's a good idea to note exactly which products you'll be using before you go any further. Your choice of products might well influence a few of the basic design decisions ahead.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Now that that's over with, it's time to move on to something a bit trickier. Once you have answers in mind for all four fundamental questions, you're ready to start building your campaign. Meet me here in thirty days for "World Building, Part I."

Ray Winninger is a veteran game designer and long-time Dungeon Master. In future columns Ray promises to pass on more of his wisdom but admits that certain secrets will go with him to the grave.

FREE - Urth CD-ROM Game - FREE

Inventory Clearance

Order Now - a $35 value - yours FREE

Have we gone Crazy ?

Nope, but you must be if you pass this up. Our new games are being released.

We need to clear our inventory ASAP.

So, if you cover the shipping and handeling charges (only $ 9), we will give you the boxed Collector edition for FREE.

Website: WWW.DRAGONMM.COM

Urth

Role Playing Campaign

To order a CD-ROM

send $ 9 for shipping to:

Dragon Multimedia
PO Box 230184
Graves End Station
Brooklyn, NY
11223

How to get the FREE Urth CD-ROM

1) Order immediately, today - NOW !!!
2) Send us your name and address
3) Include $ 9 for shipping & handeling (Heck, we're giving it to you FREE)

Includes Campaign & Module !!!

* 1,500 Pages
* 250 Color Maps
* 100 Battle Maps
* 70 Countries
* 125 Color Portraits
* plus sound effects & music

7.5 Billion Horsepower

Front and Wing Mounted Flux Cannons

It's not just your ship it's a member of the party

Starships, the newest supplement for the **Alternity**® roleplaying game, brings 18 **new** spacefaring vehicles to your campaign. Includes floor plans for every craft and **new** rules detailing onboard systems, faster-than-light travel, and more.

It's everything you need to get off the ground.

Starships
TSR # 11319
ISBN #0-7869-1319-3
Available January '99

STARSHIPS

Get there.

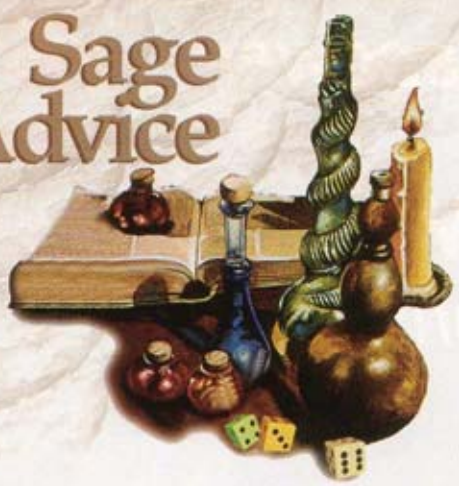
ALTERNITY®
SCIENCE FICTION ROLEPLAYING GAME

visit our web site
<**www.tsr.com**>.

Questions?
Call (800) 324-6496

® and ™ designate trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. ©1999 TSR, Inc. All rights reserved. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

Need Some Help With Your Game?

Send your questions about the games produced by TSR, Inc. to "Sage Advice," *Dragon Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055.
In Europe, write to: "Sage Advice," *Dragon Magazine*, Wizards of the Coast, Belgium P.O. Box 34, 2300 Turnhout, Belgium +32-14-44-30-44
In the U.K., write to: "Sage Advice," *Dragon Magazine* Wizards of the Coast, P.O. Box 61 Maidenhead, Berkshire SL61FX

You may also email your questions to **thesage@wizards.com.**

The sage cannot make personal replies; please include no SASE with your questions.

The Sage considers diverse topics this month, from breathing and spellcasting underwater to what characters can accomplish with called shots. The Sage also takes a brief side trip to the universe of the ALTERNITY® game.

If a character changes into a sahuagin (or another water-breathing humanoid) with a *polymorph self* or *shapechange* spell, she can breathe underwater. Can the character also cast spells or use scrolls underwater?

Assuming a water-breathing form (or using a *water breathing* spell) doesn't allow a character to cast spells underwater. The character must be able to move and speak freely. Even if the character assumes a form adapted to water, she will still have some trouble completing the gestures (somatic components) required for spellcasting. Even worse, a land-dwelling character's vocal apparatus won't allow the character to speak underwater (a must for spells with verbal components), even if the character has the means to breathe water. To cast spells, a character needs a *free action* effect (to allow speech) in addition to some mode of breathing. Certain effects, such as *airy water* or a *helm of underwater action*, allow breathing and speaking.

In any case, scrolls don't work well underwater—they're ruined if they get soaking wet.

For a detailed examination of underwater spellcasting and the attendant difficulties, see *Of Ships and the Sea*, Chapter 7.

Ghul lords, from the *Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*, have an ability called manipulation. What is a manipulation exactly? How is it learned?

> IF A CHARACTER CHANGES into a sahuagin ... with a *polymorph self* or *shapechange* spell, can she breath underwater?

A manipulation is a special skill that converts the ghul lord's life energy into a spell-like effect. Any time a ghul lord uses a manipulation, he expends hit points (one hit point per level of the manipulation).

Manipulations are special nonweapon proficiencies available only to ghul lords. At 1st level, a ghul lord can know one or two manipulations from the list on page 60 of the *Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*. Each manipulation requires one proficiency slot. Thereafter, the ghul lord can automatically learn another manipulation whenever the character gains another nonweapon proficiency by spending the slot on a manipulation.

When a ghul lord uses a manipulation, how do you determine the manipulation's level for purposes of its cost in hit points? How about for purposes of dispelling the effect? Can a manipulation be dispelled?

A manipulation's "level" in terms of cost is equal to the level of the spell it simulates. For example, a travel manipulation that allows the ghul lord to fly would be similar to the 3rd-level *fly* spell, and the ghul lord would suffer 3 points of damage for using it. For purposes of *dispel magic* (and for any level-based variable the manipulation might have), use the ghul lord's level.

A magical effect created through manipulations can be dispelled just as any other effect can (but see next question).

A ghul lord's manipulations usually explode when they come into contact with normal magic. What about spells such as *dispel magic* and *antimagic shell*? What about magical items such as a *ring of protection*?

Spells and spell-like effects create explosions when interacting with manipulations. Magical bonuses, breath weapons, and other magical abilities do not. An *antimagic shell* suppresses manipulations and dampens out any explosions they might cause.

Technically, a *dispel magic* spell should cause an explosion if its area of effect overlaps a manipulation. I suggest, however, that you roll for a successful *dispel* first. If the *dispel* succeeds, the manipulation is removed and there is no explosion. If the *dispel* fails, there is an explosion.

A *detect magic* spell's area of effect is a path that begins at the caster and extends out 60 feet. A caster who determines the existence of magic on a ghul lord who was using a manipulation would pretty much explode when his *detect magic* spell interacts with the ghul lord's magic, right?

Possibly, but probably not. An explosion occurs only where the two spell effects overlap—not throughout both areas of effect. For example, if a character using a *detect magic* spell was 40 feet away from a ghul lord who had used a manipulation to create a *protection from good* effect, only the ghul lord would be caught in the resulting explosion, because the *protection from good* spell's area of effect (a 3'-radius around the caster) isn't big enough to include the other character.

The 5th-level Priest spell *crown of flame* from the *Planewalker's Handbook* says the spell creates a blazingly hot beacon of the powers of good, burning all innately evil creatures within 10 feet. This sounds like a great spell, except for one thing: most denizens of the Lower Planes are either resistant or totally immune to fire. Does fire resistance or immunity work against the effects of this otherwise wonderful spell?

The "flame" from *crown of flame* is not fire at all, but divine energy. It burns any innately evil creature (fiend, undead, evil spirit, or evil faerie) that comes within 10 feet of the caster. No sort of immunity to heat or fire stops the effect, but magic resistance applies.

How does a character use protective circles? One of my characters has just found one. What does he do with it?

If the PC is smart, nothing. Protective circles are used in the summoning and binding of powerful extra-planar creatures. This is an endeavor that usually works out poorly for any mortal foolish enough to try it (especially when using a protective circle of unknown origins).

If you're still curious, check out the description for the 6th-level Wizard spell *ensnarement* in the *PHB*.

If a spellcaster casts a spell with a long duration (the Priest spell *call lightning*, for example), are the spell's range and area of effect fixed from the point where the spell is cast, or do they move with the caster?

A spell's range is usually measured from the caster to the spell's target at the time when the effect is released.

In the case of *call lightning*, treat each bolt called as a separate spell. The range is the maximum distance between the caster and the target point for any bolt of lightning called with the spell. It does not matter how far the caster has moved from the place where she first cast the spell, so long as there is still a storm overhead.

CAN THE AREA OF EFFECT of a spell be moved about within the range of the spell?

Can the area of effect be moved about within the range of the spell? For example, if a Wizard casts a *spectral force* of a dragon (assuming a dragon small enough to fit in the area of effect), can the dragon then leave the area of effect, provided that it stays within the range of the spell? If the caster moves, does the area of effect move?

Except in a very few cases, a spell's area of effect is fixed once a spell has been cast. (*Call lightning* is one of the exceptions because it produces a number of different bolts of lightning over time.) While an illusory creature can move about inside the spell's area of effect, it cannot leave the area of effect, nor can the area of effect move.

Do PCs have to spend a weapon proficiency slot on rods to use the various rods effectively in combat? If so, that would be very costly to all the classes except warriors (who already have a variety of weapons available). I know some rods are like weapons, and their descriptions say what weapon they are like, but others don't. And what about speed factors?

Generally, a rod works just as a staff in combat, and one can use a Staff proficiency and speed factor to use a rod. If a rod simulates a particular type of weapon, you use the proficiency and speed factor for that weapon. For example, there's no *rod of lordly might* weapon proficiency. One uses a Mace, Sword, Axe, or Spear proficiency and speed factor (minus any magical adjustments) when using the item in combat.

If a character has a longbow and is entitled to three attacks per round, how many called shots can that character attempt each round?

Every shot the character takes can be a called shot, but the DM might choose to set a limit. When a character attempts a called shot, remember to apply both the attack penalty (–4) and the initiative penalty (+1).

Can the trick shot described in *The Complete Book of Elves* be used as a called shot? That is, can an elven archer use his trick shot bonus to negate the attack penalties for a called shot?

No. The trick shooting bonus applies to the trick shots described in Chapter 9 of *The Complete Book of Elves* (broken charge shot, hanging tree shot, etc.), not to called shots.

Is it possible to disable an opponent by making a called shot to put an arrow in his sword arm, thus making it unusable?

Not under the standard AD&D® game rules. If you have some kind of disarming rules in play (both *The Complete*

ALTERNITY® Game Questions

How many skill points must you spend to get cyberware? Page 239 of the *Player's Handbook* says that new cyberware requires an expenditure of 10 skill points in most cases. The descriptions of a few of the cyberware items in the *Player's Handbook* say the items have no skill-point costs. There seems to be no mention of skill-point costs for the cyberware in the *Arms & Equipment Guide*. In *DRAGON® Magazine* #250, the article on Mechalus presents the new cyberware item called ghost skin. This item requires only 4 skill points. Why does it require less than other cyberware? Wouldn't it make more sense if all cyberware had varying skill-point costs ?

A character pays 10 skill points—once—for the ability to use cyberware. The skill-point expenditure is a prerequisite for receiving cyberware, not a cost per piece installed. Some cyberware, such as a bio watch, is easy to use and does not require previous cyber training. Some cyberware, such as a ghost skin, requires extra training.

When in doubt, just look at the description for a piece of cyberware. If it does not mention a skill point cost, the initial 10-point cost for cyber implants is all the character needs. If an extra cost is indicated, it is in addition to the 10-point cost for implants. If the description specifically says there is no cost, the initial 10 skill points for cyber implants isn't necessary—anyone who can afford to buy the piece can use it.

An ALTERNITY character has a certain number of actions per round, but then guns do, too. Can a character fire once for every action she gets, or every action the gun gets? Or can a character use a gun's full number of actions for each action the character gets?

You're referring to the "Actions" rating of weapons. The weapon's actions rating is the maximum number of times any character can fire it in one round. When using a weapon, a character can keep going until her weapon runs out of actions. For example, if a character is allowed two actions a round, but her weapon is only allowed one, the character can use that weapon only once. The character can use her second action to reload the weapon, however. If the weapon is allowed more actions than the character, then the character is still limited to her maximum number of actions.

Page 35 of the *Player's Handbook* says the cost of a skill that is related to a hero's profession is equal to one point less than the number shown on the skill list. With this in mind, does a Mindwalker get to buy psionic skills at one point less than the listed price? If so, this could lead to an extremely powerful character.

No, a Mindwalker pays the full cost from Table P52 when buying psionic skills. You seem to have overlooked the note to this effect on page 228.

Page 65 of the STAR*DRIVE™ campaign setting book says that a human character from the Thuldan Empire receives, as a bonus, attribute scores of 15 in both Strength and Constitution. They also still receive 60 points to spend in character creation for the rest of the attributes. There are only four more attributes (Willpower, Personality, Dexterity, and Intelligence). That means a starting human character could have all 6 attribute scores of 15!

You've misread the rule. Thuldans indeed have maximums of 15 for Strength and Constitution, not the usual 14. However, they don't get either rating for free; they have to buy them from their allotment of 60 points for ability scores, just like everyone else.

When firing a burst, a character has a bonus to hit. Is damage the same as firing a single shot, or do you roll extra damage? Also, when firing on automatic, you can fire at three different enemies. Does each opponent who is hit take the same damage, or is damage rolled for each target hit?

The firing mode doesn't affect damage, just the number of targets and the chance to hit. Note that the attack bonus from a burst could increase the amount of damage an opponent suffers when hit. Roll damage separately for each target hit.With autofire, it might be possible to score different levels of success against different targets, and thus considerably different amounts of damage.

Fighter's Handbook and the *Combat & Tactics* books have such rules), you might be able to make the character drop his weapon; just treat the shot as disarm attempt. If you're using the critical hit rules from the *Combat & Tactics* book, it is indeed possible to render a limb useless with a called shot.

What are the characteristics of an elven bow? I found it among the equipment listed in the *Skills & Powers* book, but there is no description.

An elven bow costs 150 gp and weighs 8 lbs. It can be any type of bow in the AD&D game (but not a crossbow) and can function as a club or staff (Dmg 1d6/1d3). See *The Complete Book of Elves* for details.

Can a Thief throw an additional dagger each round by using a second hand, as can be done with melee attacks? What about larger things such as bolas and javelins? Can a specialist pull this off?

No, you can't use the two-weapon rule to increase your missile rate of fire, or can you use multiple attacks from class and level. Missile specialists can receive higher rates of fire, depending on which set of specialization rules you use. Check out Chapter 4 of the *Combat & Tactics* book (pages 74–75).

What is required to set an ambush? How do you spot an ambush?

The basic requirements for an ambush are a place to hide and the ability to see the party you're trying to ambush before they see you. The DM has to decide when an ambush works. (It's strictly a judgment call.) If it works, the target does not detect it unless specifically looking in the right place. I suggest a saving throw vs. petrification at a –2 penalty (but Wisdom bonuses apply).

Skip Williams notes that a well-laid ambush can be a wonderful thing. He also adds that a good ambush is much easier to appreciate when one is doing the ambushing, which may explain why he spends more time behind the DM screen than at the players' end of the table.

Experience this online fantasy world at **www.3do.com/Meridian**

Intense Battles

Ancient Magic

MERIDIAN 59™

Dark Auspices

MASSIVELY MULTI-PLAYER INTERNET RPG

3DO™

© 1998 The 3DO Company. All Rights Reserved. 3DO, Meridian 59, and their respective logos, are trademarks or registered trademarks of The 3DO Company in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks and trade names belong to their respective owners.

The New Illithid Arsenal

by Christopher M. Schwartz

illustrated by Mark Nelson

Long ago, the once mighty Illithid Empire crumbled under the weight of multiple slave rebellions, forcing the surviving mind flayers to seek refuge deep within the bowels of a thousand worlds. There they waited, building darker and more secretive kingdoms, biding their time until their inevitable return to dominance. Even their immeasurable patience has a limit. They have watched the surface dwellers raise cities wherever the sun shines its accursed light, they have watched their fellow denizens of the Underdark grow in power and numbers, and they have even felt the terrible psionic shockwaves from the death of their god Maanzecorian (see the Planescape® *adventure* **Dead Gods**). *The illithids have recently begun rearming their impressive war machine with powerful new psionic creations. These are the tools and minions with which they will rebuild what they once thought to be eternal. The elder brains stir, and the tentacles of the illithids reach out, straining to choke the planes in their mighty grasp once again.*

New Psionic Items

The psionic powers of the items listed below are compatible with both the psionic system from *The Complete Psionics Handbook* and the system included in *Player's Option®: Skills & Powers*. The Power Score for each psionic power of the items is equal to the Intelligence of the being wielding it for those using *The Complete Psionics Handbook*; the MTHAC0 of each item is equal to the MTHAC0 of the user for those using *Skills & Powers*. Where applicable, PSP cost is listed with the activation cost first, then the cost to maintain the power each additional round.

Void Spheres

These psionically empowered devices appear in sets of two small, egg-shaped stones of smooth greenish black. *Void spheres* are considered a masterwork of psionic craftsmanship. The possession of one or more sets lends great prestige to an illithid community because of their potent ability to banish planar foes, as well as to summon aid to the side of the mind flayers.

To use the banishment power of the spheres, one must hold them in hand and concentrate, channeling 30 PSPs into their psionic circuitry while making a Power Score (MTHAC0 against MAC 9) check. If successful, the spheres rise from the wielder's hand and orbit each other clockwise about a foot in front of the user. As they pick up speed, the spheres begin to glow an eerie green, slowly forming a planar vortex. The user has control over the movement of the vortex, and, by making a THAC0 (MTHAC0) roll, may cause it to strike a foe. Any extraplanar being struck by the vortex must make a saving throw vs. spell or be sucked into it and immediately sent back to its home plane. The wielder of the *void spheres* may keep the vortex open by paying a maintenance cost of 30 PSPs per round. The banished creature may not return to the plane from which it was removed until a day has passed, a feature specifically developed as a defense against the innate planeshifting powers of the githyanki and githzerai, sworn enemies of the mind flayers.

The second function of the *void spheres* has a much more general use. Once every three days, the spheres can open a

one-way portal to Ilsensine's realm, the Caverns of Thought. By spending 20 PSPs, the wielder can cause the stones to orbit each other counterclockwise, summoning a pack of 2d10 cranium rats from the Caverns of Thought. The rats obey the mental commands of the spheres' owner as long as he pays a maintenance cost of 20 PSPs per hour of their servitude, up to a maximum of ten hours for any one summoning.

Void spheres can be used by any Psionicist or wild talent regardless of race. Nonillithids should note, however, that the cranium rats are servitors of Ilsensine itself and are quite likely (70% chance) to turn on their unauthorized master after a 1d6 rounds of service.

Tessadyle Robe

Tessadyle is a stringy fungus that grows in areas of the Underdark that are under strong psionic influence. As such, it can often be found in the vicinity of mind flayer communities. Tessadyle is psionically reactive and quite receptive to psionic circuitry. The fungus can also be made into a durable cloth that the Creative Creed is fond of fashioning into psionically powered clothing. One example of their handiwork is the *tessadyle robe*.

When the robe is donned, the wearer receives the sensation that the cloth is aware and actively adjusting to his height, his girth, even the way he walks. The robe gives its wearer such a free, flowing sense of movement that he feels quicker and more agile, receiving a –2 bonus to AC. In addition, the robe grants the wearer the ability to call upon the psionic powers of *body equilibrium*, *body weaponry*, and *cell adjustment* by channeling the proper amount of PSPs through the tessadyle fibers. Each power may be used once per day. Using *body equilibrium* causes the robe to lengthen and stiffen, lifting the wearer off of his feet and carrying him over normally impassable surfaces. If that power is used to slow a fall, the robe balloons up, allowing the wearer to float down safely. When *body weaponry* is activated, the sleeves of the robe elongate past the hands, twisting themselves into the shape of the weapon chosen. The *cell adjustment* power may be used only on the person wearing the robe and causes it to wrap firmly around the wearer and pulse with psionic energy as it cures disease and heals damage.

A tessadyle robe may be worn by individuals of any race, but the peculiar nature of the cloth makes it very noticeable to the mind flayers, who are sure to have a few questions as to how a nonillithid got his hands on one.

Circlet of Venilkesk

Few dangers pose so great a threat to illithidkind as the undead. These mindless creatures are sustained by magic and are immune to many psionic powers. Their decaying bodies radiate no heat, rendering them virtually invisible to the infravision that mind flayers rely on to navigate the Underdark. It is no wonder that illithid research has sought to address this problem. The most potent defense the illithids have developed is known as the *circlet of Venilkesk*, named after its creator.

The *circlet* is a thin loop of metal with a psionically empowered gemstone attached to it. The intended user places the circlet around his head, and the psionic circuitry imbedded in the gemstone grants the user some power over the undead. By making a Power Score

(MTHAC0 against MAC 9) check and spending 10/5 PSPs, the wearer may psionically detect the purely magical emanations given off by the undead in a 60' radius. The *circlet of Venilkesk* is also effective against undead attacks that utilize the lifeless energies of the Negative Material Plane. Channeling 20/10 PSPs into the circlet makes the wearer immune to such negative energy attacks as level and attribute loss. However, the circlet offers no defense against the normal physical damage associated with those attacks.

Tendril Rings of Ilsensine

These devices can be created only in illithid communities that have been visited by an avatar or proxy of the god Ilsensine. They are reserved for eminent members of a mind flayer community and feature several valuable psionic powers.

Tendril rings come in pairs. They are thin slips of silver that slide over the mouth tentacles. Wearing them conveys their owner a +1 on all saving throws. The bracers are implanted with an automatic teleport trigger. When the wearer's hit points are reduced to 10 or fewer, the wearer makes a Power Score (MTHAC0 against MAC 9) check. If successful, the *tendril rings teleport* their owner without error back to a predetermined safe location on the same plane, draining half of the owner's remaining PSPs in the process. There is no way to avoid triggering this power when hit points drop below 10 without removing one or both rings.

The *tendril rings of Ilsensine* are instilled with the power of the mind flayer god itself. Once a week, when an illithid wearing the rings rubs its tentacles against each other, the contact between the rings produces an eerie sound that resonates not only physically but also mentally. A channel is opened, and an infinitesimal portion of the god's power leaks through. While illithids find these mental vibrations extremely soothing, the alien thoughts of the god cause severe disorientation to all other races. Victims of this psychic assault must save vs. paralysis or be stunned for 2d10 rounds. Psionic victims are more resistant to the attack and are only stunned for 3d4 rounds. Regardless of whether or not the save has been made, victims exposed to the maddening thoughts of Ilsensine receive a –2 to all rolls for one turn. Mages and Priests lose 1d4 random spells from their repertoires and must memorize or pray for them again. The range of this effect is 240 yards, and disorientation caused by the *tendril rings* is so acute that focus and concentration become impossible for a half day, during which time spellcasters are unable to regain spells, and Psionicists cannot replenish their PSP stores.

Gauntlet of Tyla'zhus

These weapons are a favorite of illithids who value personal defense, take an active physical role in combat, and enjoy cruder methods of interrogation.

Continuing with the tradition of naming items after their creators, a *gauntlet of Tyla'zhus* appears to be fashioned from the hide of some beast. Embedded in the palm of the gauntlet is a ruby, one of the gemstones preferred by the Creative Creed for implementing psionic circuitry. This particular circuitry allows the ruby to fire a thin ray of heat when 10 PSPs are fed into it and a Power Score (MTHAC0 against MAC 9) check is made. The heat ray has a maximum range of 30 feet and strikes for 2d6 points of damage.

The circuitry in the gauntlet also allows the user to *inflict pain* on a target without first requiring a *mindlink* or contact. Unlike the telepathic devotion, this power cannot be used in combat. Touching the bare flesh of the victim, the user spends 3/2 PSPs on the power, forcing a saving throw vs. paralyzation to be made. If successful, the victim withstands the pain. Otherwise, the pain is strong enough to force those being questioned to divulge the demanded information to the interrogator.

Note that this final power is effective on nonplayer characters only; PCs are not so affected.

Illithid Vehicles

Abductor

The abductor is the Creative Creed's first attempt at designing a flying craft to supplement the ground forces of the mind flayers. The craft serves two purposes: to capture and contain viable candidates for ceremorphosis, and to harry the airborne foes that usually have a distinct advantage over the illithids and their armies.

Though not a living organism, an inactive abductor resembles a giant clam. Perfectly circular and 12 feet in diameter, its surface appears to be made of polished seashell. At the top and center of the abductor there is a smaller circle made of a soft, pinkish material resembling living flesh. To activate the craft, an illithid must stand in the smaller circle and concentrate on the proper mental commands. The abductor recognizes the mental signatures of illithids only.

Upon activation, a transparent bubble rises up from the control circle and seals just above the head of the illithid pilot. The shell he is standing on rises a foot or so from the bottom half of the craft, revealing a thick, fleshy interior. Eight sphincterlike openings are spaced evenly around this interior. On command, the craft rises up into the air, powered by a special form of *telekinesis* psionically "wired" into the hull of the craft. The abductor is extremely responsive, moving at a rate of 35 (A). An abductor has an AC 2 and can suffer 40 points of damage before becoming inoperable. The illithid pilot receives extra protection underneath the flight bubble, lowering his effective AC to 0.

Eight tentacles extend outward from the openings in the interior of the craft. These tentacles allow the abductor's pilot to make two attacks per round on an individual target. The radial anatomy of the abductor also allows a different foe to be targeted from each side of the craft—forward, back, right, and left. Thus, although this gives the abductor a possible eight attacks per round, a single foe may not be attacked more than twice in a single round. Each tentacle discharges a bolt of electricity upon contact, striking for 1d10 points of damage. Foes in metal armor suffer an extra 2 points of damage. If both tentacles hit the same target in one round, the victim must save vs. paralyzation or be held fast in the clutches of the abductor. The captive may attempt a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll to escape the viselike grip. Each tentacle can withstand 10 points of damage before being destroyed. An abductor can hold up to four captives before becoming too heavy to pilot safely.

The abductor has been used to great success in recent battles against githyanki mounted on red dragons. A small force of abductors swoop in, grab the githyanki from the backs of the dragons, and disorient the beasts long enough for a successful attack by mind flayer ground forces. Reports of huge abductors flying about at night in rural areas, capturing human farmers, and leaving strange markings in their crop fields have been filtering in from dozens of Prime Material worlds, but local authorities deny all of these outlandish rumors.

Kezreth

To the illithids, few punishments could be as severe as being denied the honor to join with their elder brain at the end of their lives. When an illithid seriously fails the community, the possibility of such an exile causes many to perform any act of penance to redeem themselves. The Creative Creed, living up to its name, has developed both a means of redemption for these fallen illithids and an extremely powerful new weapon to use against their numerous enemies.

A *kezreth*, named after the first illithid to undergo such a transformation, serves as both a living troop transport and a powerful weapon. An illithid volunteering to be transformed is beheaded. The head is placed in a huge vat of preservative fluids, psionically active mucous, and brine from the elder brain's pool. Creatives tend to the transforming kezreth for a little over two years until the metamorphosis is complete. A fully transformed kezreth bears some resemblance to its former existence, appearing to be a gargantuan (40'-tall) illithid head. The mouth has lost its rows of sharp teeth and shifted to the back of the head, the mouth tentacles have moved downward toward where the neck once was, and a long, black third eye has developed on the forehead of the thing.

A kezreth retains its personality and sentience. It gains an AC of 3 and possesses 180 hp. The gigantic beast pulls itself along on its tentacles, affording it a movement rate of 18. The kezreth can crawl along walls and ceilings with no difficulty and is also amphibious. A kezreth can carry up to fifteen man-sized creatures. The hollow body cavity is reached from the back of the skull through the former mouth opening. Illithids may see out of the kezreth's own eyes and direct the beast psionically.

Kezreth are extremely powerful threats in combat. They may rear up on two tentacles to strike with their other two, giving them two attacks per round for 2d8 points of damage each. (Kezreth retain the THAC0 of their former lives.) The third eye of the kezreth may project an intense beam of telekinetic force 8 feet wide and 50 feet long once every three rounds. Creatures hit by the beam suffer 6d10 points damage or half that if they succeed a save vs. breath weapon.

Kezreth are used to power through enemy lines and drop off a force of thralls and illithids. They are also dispatched to deal with larger threats, such as fiends summoned by drow wizards and the red dragon allies of the githyanki. They obey orders unquestioningly, serving to the best of their abilities so that they may join with the elder brain at the time of their commencement. Kezreth do not sleep or eat, but they must be immersed in the special transformative fluid they were created in for a full day out of every week.

New Minions

One of the biggest assets of the illithid war machine is that its armies aren't composed of a large number of illithids in the front lines, but rather a mix of thrall races and psionically altered allies. This allows the simultaneous use of both physical force and psionic might as wave after wave of thrall and lesser ceremorphs batter down the enemy lines while the illithids advance and retreat, striking both physically and mentally and wearing down even the most powerful of foes. With the rearming of the illithid forces, new minions were quickly developed, trained, and added to the illithid arsenal. See the following pages for three of these new minions.

Chris Schwartz is a student at NYU School of Law. Most of his game ideas come to him while he travels the subway, where the sights, sounds, and smells are often otherworldly.

Golem, Nyraala

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special (See Below)
INTELLIGENCE:	Non-(0)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	8
HIT DICE:	10
THAC0:	11
NO. ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d8/2d8/1d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Surprise
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Golem Immunities, +1 or better weapons to hit, tentacle parry
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	70%
SIZE:	L (10')
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	9,000

Nyraala golems are a melding of humanoid flesh, psionically active illithid mucous, and a special form of Underdark fungus that can be harvested only once every ten years. From the waist up, the creature has a purple humanoid torso with two powerful humanoid arms. The skin is moist and gives off a faint odor of spoiled meat. In place of a neck and head is a very long, thick tentacle. Below the waist, these psionic creations are supported by three large tentacles in place of legs. Nyraala golems also have a second form; they can break down into mounds of seemingly inactive fungal growth. These mounds cannot move except to assume their golem form.

Nyraala golems never speak but can understand the mental commands of their mind flayer creators. When moving, their bodies make a sickening, liquid squishing sound.

Combat: Nyraala golems are effectively mindless, like other, lesser golems. However, the illithids' psionic engineering allows them to program the constructs to execute efficient, preset tactics in the heat of battle. When an enemy is detected, nyraala golems reanimate their bodies in a gory implosion of mucous and flailing limbs, imposing a –3 penalty to their opponents' surprise rolls. Opponents who survive this first encounter may recognize the distinctive appearance of nyraala fungal mounds in the future (with an Intelligence check at a –2 penalty). Much like brain golems, nyraala golems instinctively sense and focus their attacks on opponent spellcasters. They may strike each round with their fists to deliver two smashing punches and then whip their head-tentacles around for a powerful strike. When facing opponents with superior melee abilities, the nyraala golems are programmed to attempt to foil damaging close range attacks. They may forfeit the next rounds' tentacle strike and use their head-tentacles to parry any one melee attack. To do so, the golem must make an attack roll against their opponent. The roll is made after their attacker makes their own attack roll. If successful, no damage is done to the golem from that attack. If the golem's attack roll falls short by no more than four, only half damage is done.

Nyraala golems are immune to poison, death magic, and all forms of mental attacks.

Habitat/Society: These automatons are popular with illithid communities for two reasons. One, they provide a level of protection almost equal to the enormously powerful brain golems (q.v.) without making it necessary to petition the elder brain for one and having it available for only one task. Two, nyraala golems can break their bodies down into a peculiar mound of fungal growth, providing them with a very effective form of camouflage. It is in this form that they are usually set to guard the dwellings and treasure chambers of their illithid masters. Nyraala golems have also been programmed to retrieve items from hostile areas, protect travelling mind flayers and the bodies of astral projecting ones, and capture specific targets. Programming any action into a particular golem takes at least a day, and each may be set to perform only one task at a time. The psionic programming process allows for only very specific actions to be set, and it is not unknown for a nyraala golem to stop and remain motionless when unforeseen circumstances complicate its currently assigned task.

Ecology: Nyraala golems are artificial lifeforms. They neither contribute to nor expend the resources of their environment. They do, however, provide a measure of status to their illithid owners as the cost in resources to create them is usually quite high and must be provided to a member the Creative Creed by their potential owner.

Ceremorph, Tzakandi

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Community
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11–12)
TREASURE:	D
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
NO. APPEARING:	2–8
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	8, Swim 12
HIT DICE:	6
THAC0:	15
NO. ATTACKS:	3 or 1 by weapon
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4/1d4/1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spit acid, psionics
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Psionics
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	30%
SIZE:	M (7')
MORALE:	Fanatic (17–18)
XP VALUE:	1,400

Psionics Summary:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Att/Def	Score	PSPs
5	2/3/10	II, PB, PsC/ IF, TW, MB	=Int	4d6+50

Player's Option: #AT 1; MTHAC0 14; MAC 8

Psychokinesis—Sciences: *detonate, telekinesis;* Devotions: *control light, inertial barrier, levitation, molecular agitation, molecular manipulation*

Psychometabolism—Sciences: *complete healing;* Devotions: *adrenaline control, body control, heightened senses, chameleon power, cell adjustment*

A popular area of illithid research involves larval implantation in a variety of host species. Many humanoid races serve as good candidates for implantation, undergoing normal ceremorphosis and developing into typical mind flayers. Quite a few humanoid races reject larval implantation or become new forms known collectively as "flayer-kin." The tzakandi are one such breed, created by the ceremorphosis of lizard men.

Tzakandi resemble lizard men with more intelligence in their eyes and more deeply green skin. Their heads are longer than those of normal lizard men, tapering at the top into two long tentacles that fall down their backs like writhing ponytails. Tzakandi are always on edge, ready to pounce on any threat to their illithid masters. In addition to being able to converse with the illithids mentally, tzakandi speak the language of lizard men.

Combat: Illithids value tzakandi ceremorphs for one reason—they are extremely vicious. The illithids provide their prize enforcers with large training halls in which to hone their abilities with live captives to practice on. Preferring to work in pairs, one of the ceremorphs focuses its attention on spellcasters and psionicists while the other engages any fighters present. They attack with a claw/claw/bite routine. Intelligent enough to use their psionic powers effectively, tzakandi often activate sensory and defensive powers and use offensive powers to soften up the competition before engaging in melee. When set against powerful opposition, the ceremorphs employ hit-and-run tactics, with one on the offensive as the other seeks cover. If they are acting as bodyguards, however, they do not retreat until the threat has passed or until they are dead. Once per day, each tzakandi may spit a glob of acid, a form of the substance illithid tentacles exude when burrowing through the cranium, that causes 2d8 points of damage (save vs. poison for half) on contact before becoming inert. Their aim is good enough to allow them to hit the eyes of their opponents on an attack roll at least three points better than needed. If successful, the victim not only suffers damage but is also effectively blinded for 1d6 rounds.

Habitat/Society: Tzakandi are valued as personal guards in illithid communities but are still treated as inferiors. Still, they are happy with their lot in life. Tzakandi are housed near their master's chambers, they are kept well fed, and they frequently are called on to do what they love most: fight and kill.

Ecology: The larvae chosen for lizard man implantation are usually larger and more aggressive than most, but they seem less intelligent according to some inscrutable illithid standard. Normally these specimens would be devoured by the elder brain, as they are unsuitable for regular implantation. They bond to the first illithid they see after the completion of their ceremorphosis and serve it without question or hesitation.

Ceremorph, Mozgriken

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Community
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore (Brain Fluids)
INTELLIGENCE:	High (13–14)
TREASURE:	None
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
NO. APPEARING:	1–2
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	4
THAC0:	19
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Psionics
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Psionics
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	S (3')
MORALE:	Unsteady (5–7)
XP VALUE:	650

Psionics Summary:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Att/Def	Score	PSPs
4	2/2/9	EW, MT/ MB, TS	=Int	3d6+30

Players Option: #AT 1; MTHAC0 14; MAC 8

Telepathy—Sciences: *probe;* Devotions: *conceal thoughts, invisibility, sight link, life detection, ESP*

Psychometabolism—Sciences: *metamorphosis, shadow form* (bonus power, does not take up a slot); Devotions: *cannibalize, chameleon, heightened senses, body weaponry*

The hideous, diminutive ceremorphs known as mozgriken are the targets of constant scorn despite their usefulness. Although they can often infiltrate an enemy's camp, they are treated poorly because of their origin: they were once deep gnomes.

Mozgriken are as small as their gnomish precursors. They have hunched backs and twisted limbs. Their heads resemble those of normal mind flayers save that they have only three tendrils and no mouth. This is a serious deformity to illithids, as mozgriken cannot ingest brains in the normal manner. Their skin is pitch black, and their tendrils appear to be nothing more than wisps of shadow, fading into nothingness at the tips. The mozgriken are tied to the Demiplane of Shadow and draw their formidable stealth from it.

Combat: Made meek by the harsh rule of their creators, mozgriken avoid combat whenever possible. They use their psionic powers of *shadow form, invisibility, chameleon,* and *metamorphosis* to hide among their foes and glean bits of vital information through the use of their other abilities, most notably *sight link* and *probe.* They are sent into enemy encampments for any number of tasks, such as estimating the size and strength of the foe, discovering their battle plans, and estimating the treasure that can be captured. If detected, mozgriken do everything in their power to escape, but if pressed into battle they can use their psionic attack forms and the *body weaponry* power. Even when they gain momentary advantage over their foes, mozgriken are more likely to seek escape over anything else.

Habitat/Society: Because of the hatred between illithids and svirfneblin, mozgriken find little respect within an illithid community. Compounding the bias against them is the fact that they've only three tentacles, a sign of imperfection, and can draw sustenance only from the fluids of the brain. They've eventually come to accept illithid rule because they know there is no other race in the Underdark that would take them in. Even if they all united, they would be too weak to survive.

Ecology: Gnomish body chemistry normally rejects attempts at larval implantation, often killing both illithid larva and the potential host. However, the Creative Breed has discovered that by using the very rare psychoportive science, *summon planar energy* (see *The Will and The Way*) to channel the essence of the Demiplane of Shadow along with a complicated process of psychic surgery and various psionic enhancement techniques, a gnome implantation can be stabilized and the ceremorph can gain a measure of power directly from the demiplane. The larvae chosen for gnomish implantation are usually the smallest, most timid specimens in the brine pool, fodder for the elder brain. Many gnomes and larvae die during the ceremorphosis, but since both are seen as inferior and expendable to the Illithid Empire, mozgriken transformation is seen as a nice alternative to simple extermination due to the effective servants the process creates.

World Premier by Internationally-Acclaimed Fantasy Artist Boris Vallejo.

THE MISTRESS OF FIRE

FANTASY COLLECTOR KNIFE

Totally New and Original Art, Featured on This Spectacular Showpiece. Rich With Sterling Silver Accents.

Shown larger than actual size of approximately 7" (17.78 cm).

It's an *exclusive original work of art* by Boris Vallejo, the most widely collected fantasy artist of our time. Appearing for the first time on this collector knife. The fully sculptured grip, accented with sterling silver, takes the form of a Dragon with a fiery-red crystal cabochon eye. The flame-shaped stainless steel blade is emblazoned with a golden flame to symbolize its fiery breath. And Boris Vallejo's full-color depiction of *The Mistress of Fire* is set into the handle at the very heart of the Dragon.

Important as it is exciting, this is Boris Vallejo's *first* collector knife. A showpiece to treasure. In a Limited Edition *forever restricted to just 45 casting days.* Imported, with padded and zippered case. Just $37.50.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. If you wish to return any purchase, you may do so within 30 days of your receipt of that purchase for replacement, credit or refund.

Rich With Sterling Silver Accents—Just $37.50.

A Limited Edition Collector Knife.
Please mail by January 31, 1999.

Knightstone Collections™
One Tower Road
Media, PA 19063-5711

Please enter my order for The Mistress of Fire, Boris Vallejo's first fantasy collector knife.

I need SEND NO MONEY NOW. I will be billed $37.50* when my knife is ready to be shipped to me. *Limit: one knife per collector.*

**Plus my state sales tax and $3.95 for shipping and handling.*

SIGNATURE _____
ALL ORDERS ARE SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE.

MR/MRS/MISS _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

ADDRESS _____ APT. # _____

CITY/STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE # (_____) _____

20055-80-001

T.NIELSEN

Ten new psionicist kits for your campaign

BY OWEN K.C. STEPHENS & LLOYD BROWN III

ILLUSTRATED BY TERESE NIELSEN

psi kits

Psionics are one of the most fascinating aspects of the AD&D® game system. Apparently added on as an afterthought in the old 1st-Edition Player's Handbook, *psionics truly became part of the fantasy gaming mainstream with the printing of* The Complete Psionics Handbook. *No longer a complex add-on for completed characters, psionics were now primarily the domain of a new, balanced character class. The Psionicist was ready to take his place next to Wizards and Clerics as a master of the fantastic forces integral to any good AD&D campaign.*

With the creation of the DARK SUN® game setting, psionics became a regular part of the AD&D game. Volumes of ideas have been written to expand the options of DARK SUN Psionicists. Few of these ideas adapt well to a non-DARK SUN setting, and almost nothing has been written specifically for Psionicists on worlds other than Athas. Perhaps because of this, few DMs make any effort to include Psionicists in their campaigns.

This is genuinely unfortunate, because psionics enrich any game in which they are included. Whether Psionicists are a well-accepted part of society, feared and hunted as monsters, or totally unknown to the common man, they provide excellent possibilities for new plots, allies, enemies, and most especially PCs. To help a DM add Psionicists to a campaign with a more European flavor, this article describes ten new character kits for the Psionicist class. Five of these Psionicist kits—Gatekeeper, Militant Psionicist, Mind Monk, Specialist, and The Voice—assume psionics are at least accepted by society, if not well understood. The other five—Charcoal Burner, Janissary, Mind Mage, Paranaturalist, and Pioneer—are designed for campaigns where psionics are totally unknown or perhaps even feared.

All these kits assume characters are made using the nonweapon proficiency rules given in the *Player's Handbook* and *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, and weapons and combat rules in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. The kits were written for use with the psionics rules presented in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* but should all work equally well with the rules in *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers*.

◄ *GATEKEEPERS ARE THE KEENEST OF GUARDIANS AND WATCHERS.*

charcoal burner

The Charcoal Burner is a member of a secret society of Psionicists who hide their activities in a land where psionics are feared or hated. Officially he is a member of the Charcoal Burner's Guild, a group that partially burns wood in huge kilns to produce quality charcoal. This requires guildsmen to work in the woods tending these fires late into the night while wearing masks to protect them from smoke. In truth, those working seek privacy for secret meetings and wear masks to protect their identities.

The guild acts as a school and support group, training Psionicists and protecting them from those who would harm them. The primary goal of a Charcoal Burner is to protect and promote Psionicists. However, he must also maintain the business of the guild, both to protect his cover and to gain political power that can promote the cause of psionics.

Races: Only humans may be Charcoal Burners.

Requirements: The Charcoal Burner must have an Intelligence of 16, in addition to the normal requirements to be a Psionicist. They may be of any Lawful alignment.

Role: An NPC Charcoal Burner must hire guards and protect caravans as would any other merchant. PCs might be hired for such tasks and eventually gain favor with the guild. Although they might notice their employers acting oddly on occasion, it is important that the PCs not immediately suspect the guild's true purpose. After they have undertaken several missions for a Charcoal Burner and shown themselves to be trustworthy, he might take the PCs into his confidence, although he would certainly swear them to secrecy. Such a patronage would involve missions like rescuing young Psionicists who are held as witches, monsters, or worse.

Alternatively, the PCs might oppose a Charcoal Burner NPC. Perhaps they captured one of his agents or foiled a plot without even realizing it. The Charcoal Burner would move cautiously against the PCs, relying on political power more than psionic abilities. An occasional well-placed nightmare or other subtle attack might be used against the heroes without the Charcoal Burner exposing himself.

A PC Charcoal Burner is much more difficult to introduce into a game. If the party has already befriended a Charcoal Burner NPC, he could simply ask them to look after his young protégé. If not, the PC Charcoal Burner could go along with the party on a dangerous journey, seeking safety in numbers. In a city-based campaign, the Charcoal Burner could be a member of the local guild, spending time with the other PCs out of friendship.

Preferred Disciplines: A Charcoal Burner must select Psychokinesis, Psychometabolism, and Telepathy as his first three disciplines, although they may be taken in any order.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Fire Bomb, Fire Staff (see Equipment).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Fire Building. *Recommended:* Etiquette, Reading/Writing.

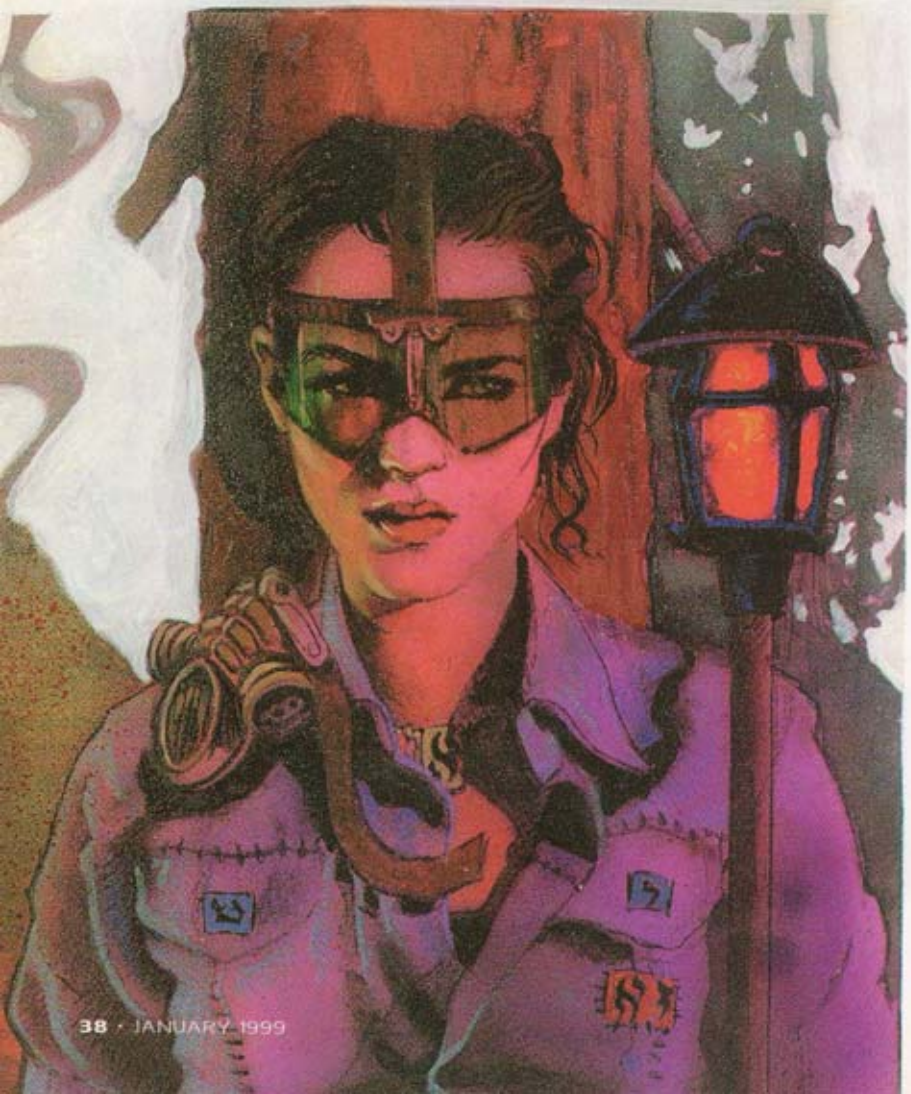
Equipment: The Charcoal Burner has access to a number of unusual weapons, provided by the guild.

The fire bomb is a simple incendiary device based on Greek fire. When thrown, treat it like a grenade-type missile. It inflicts 1d6 points of damage to everything in a 5' radius and ignites combustible materials unless they make a save vs. spell. Each bomb costs 10 gp, weighs 1 lb., and has a speed factor of 7.

The fire staff is a 5' iron pole with a simple lantern built into the top. It costs 15 gp and acts as a quarterstaff, except that when lit it inflicts one additional point of damage. One flask of oil lights a fire staff for 10 rounds.

Special Benefits: A Charcoal Burner is allowed to take the Fire Bomb and Fire Staff weapon proficiencies, even though they are not normally available to Psionicists. He may also take nonweapon proficiencies from the Wizard group at no additional cost.

The Charcoal Burner's Guild is a widely spread organization. A Charcoal Burner can always stay at a guild house for free and can have a number of



◄ *On the surface, Charcoal Burners are harmless merchants.*

companions equal to one-half his level stay there as well. There is a 30% chance of a guild house being in any given major city and a 15% chance in a minor city or large town. There is also a 1% chance per level of the Charcoal Burner that the guild will provide other aid as well, such as free equipment or the loan of 2d6 1st-level Fighters in the guild's employ.

Special Hindrances: The Charcoal Burner must maintain secrecy about his psionic powers at all times. Even though psionic powers have few outward signs of their use, people become suspicious if a Charcoal Burner's enemies burst into flames for no reason. Thus, a Charcoal Burner's psionic attacks are always carefully timed with the physical attacks of others. Psychometabolic powers can be cloaked as armor or used only when no one can see them. The Charcoal Burner heals himself only if no one saw his wounds or while he is being healed through other means.

The DM must monitor this restriction carefully, as the Charcoal Burner would rather die than risk revealing his true nature to the general public. To do so not only costs the Charcoal Burner all the benefits of this kit but also might cause other Charcoal Burners to seek his destruction as a renegade.

Wealth Options: The Charcoal Burner starts with 4d4 × 10 gp.

gatekeeper

The Gatekeeper is a Psionicist who specializes in watching, guarding, and capturing. He is not a warrior trained to fight and kill, but a far more subtle guardian who seeks to protect a place, person, or thing without killing those who cause trouble. The Gatekeeper uses clairsentient powers to detect trouble and telepathic powers to put a stop to it.

Gatekeepers are often employed by city watches and posted at the main gate or in a town circle. Religious orders sometimes employ them to watch over holy artifacts that all may see but none may touch. In a particularly civilized area, the Gatekeeper might be employed as a constable or a "bring them back alive" bounty hunter. If something needs to be kept safe in an area likely to draw large crowds, and you don't wish to start a riot in case of trouble, a Gatekeeper is perfect for the job.

Races: Any race able to be a Psionicist may be a Gatekeeper.

Requirements: A Gatekeeper must have a Charisma of at least 13 in addition to the normal requirements to be a Psionicist. He may be Lawful Good or Lawful Neutral.

Role: An NPC Gatekeeper is likely to be encountered at a city's main gate or perhaps guarding a famous object or person. If the PCs are also employed to protect this thing, they find the Gatekeeper to be a valuable ally. If the PCs wish to steal the object, even if for a good cause, they are likely to find the Gatekeeper a troublesome obstacle.

Either a PC or NPC Gatekeeper works well as a regular character in a city-based campaign. In an adventuring party, a PC Gatekeeper might be employed to act as a rich PC's bodyguard, or he might be sent along to watch over something the PCs have borrowed for a particular mission. Of course, an unemployed Gatekeeper might join such a group simply to earn enough money to eat.

Preferred Disciplines: Gatekeepers must choose Clairsentience as their primary discipline and Telepathy as their second.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Net, Whip (see Special Benefits).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Alertness. *Recommended:* Heraldry, Reading/Writing, Rejuvenation

Equipment: Gatekeepers tend to wear light armor and carry one small normal weapon and one nonlethal weapon.

Special Benefits: Since the Gatekeeper is often supposed to stop trouble without killing anyone, he may choose proficiencies in any nonlethal weapons (such as the lasso, net, sap, or whip).

The primary talent of the Gatekeeper is *aura sight*, and all Gatekeepers must select this as their first science. Gatekeepers are particularly adept with this power, and gain a +1 bonus to any attempt to use it every third level (+1 at 1st–3rd, +2 at 4th–6th, etc.). Additionally, a Gatekeeper may attempt to read three auras each round, rather than two.

Special Hindrances: The Gatekeeper loathes killing anyone or anything without necessity. Whenever using a standard weapon against a target for the first time, the Gatekeeper suffers a –3 penalty. Subsequent attacks against that target in the same fight have normal probabilities to hit. A Gatekeeper using a weapon designed to capture or knock out an opponent does not suffer this penalty.

Wealth Options: The Gatekeeper starts with 4d4 × 10 gp.

janissary

The Janissary is a well-trained mercenary from a foreign land, where psionics are better known and accepted. He uses his psionics to enhance his martial skill, making him easily the match for more traditional local warriors. The Janissary's powers are often subtle, and many of his opponents never realize the true nature of his talents.

In the Janissary's homeland, psionic powers are accepted and revered. ➤

The disciple of a strict code of honor, the Janissary has left his homeland to seek employment as a soldier, bodyguard, or member of a city watch. Although often distrusted by common folk, the Janissary's unswerving loyalty makes him popular with his employers, who are often noblemen.

Races: Only dwarves, gnomes, and humans may be Janissaries.

Requirements: The Janissary must have a Strength of 12 and a Constitution of 15 in addition to the normal requirements to be a Psionicist. He must be Lawful Good or Lawful Neutral.

Role: A Janissary NPC is usually found in the service of a powerful noble, perhaps as part of an elite guard. A Janissary PC could be employed by a city or council in a campaign based around one location, or hired by a rich member of an adventuring party. Either a PC or NPC, a Janissary could be in the employ of someone allied to an adventuring party, loaned to them for a particularly dangerous mission.

Introducing a single Janissary as either an enemy or ally is an excellent way to introduce psionics into a long-running campaign. As a foreigner, the Janissary is expected to have beliefs and habits that seem strange to the local population. Although psionics might seem new and unusual to the existing PCs, to the Janissary they are just another part of his everyday life. As the PCs run into more Janissaries or spend more time with one who has joined their party, they too will come to accept and understand psionics.

Preferred Disciplines: All Janissaries must choose Psychometabolism as their primary discipline. Clairsentience and Psychokinesis are most commonly chosen next.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* The Janissary receives one bonus weapon proficiency at first level which may be used for any weapon, even one not normally allowed to Psionicists. At 5th level, the Janissary automatically becomes specialized in his bonus weapon. *Recommended:* Scimitars are popular with Janissaries, as are ranged weapons like the light crossbow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Blind-Fighting, Endurance, Survival.

Equipment: The Janissary tends to carry equipment similar to that of a fighter. Unlike most Psionicists, the Janissary usually wears heavy armor (see Special Benefits) and carries multiple weapons. Most also have a collection of scarves and trinkets from their homeland.

Special Benefits: In addition to the bonus weapon proficiency and specialization, the Janissary has two special benefits.

First, the Janissary has access to nonweapon proficiencies from the Warrior group at normal cost—no additional proficiency slots are required.

Secondly, the Janissary may wear heavy armor, suffering only the penalties shown below to all attempts to activate psionic powers while in such armor.

Armor Type	Penalty
Brigadine, ring, scale, or splint	0
Chain or banded	–1
Plate mail or field plate	–2
Full plate	–4

Special Hindrances: The Janissary studies martial skills far more than any other Psionicist, but his improved battle prowess comes at a price. The time spent in military training limits the Janissary's development of psionic powers. As a result, he has a reduced number of sciences and devotions available and fewer PSPs than other Psionicists.

A Janissary has one fewer science and devotion at each level than a standard Psionicist. Thus he does not gain any sciences until 3rd level, when he would have 1 science and 6 devotions. When figuring starting PSPs for Janissaries, treat their Intelligence and Wisdom as if they were 1 point lower (i.e., a Janissary with an Intelligence of 16, Wisdom of 17, and a Constitution of 16 determines starting PSP as if he had Intelligence 15, Wisdom 16, and Constitution 16). Janissaries gain additional PSP normally as they go up in levels.

The Janissary has additional social limitations. As a foreigner and mercenary, the Janissary is often viewed with suspicion and sometimes fear by common folk. When employed by a noble or well-known member of a community, this animosity is limited to a +1 reaction adjustment penalty for low ranking NPCs. When lacking such employment, the Janissary suffers a +3 reaction penalty for all NPCs, except possibly those seeking to hire him.

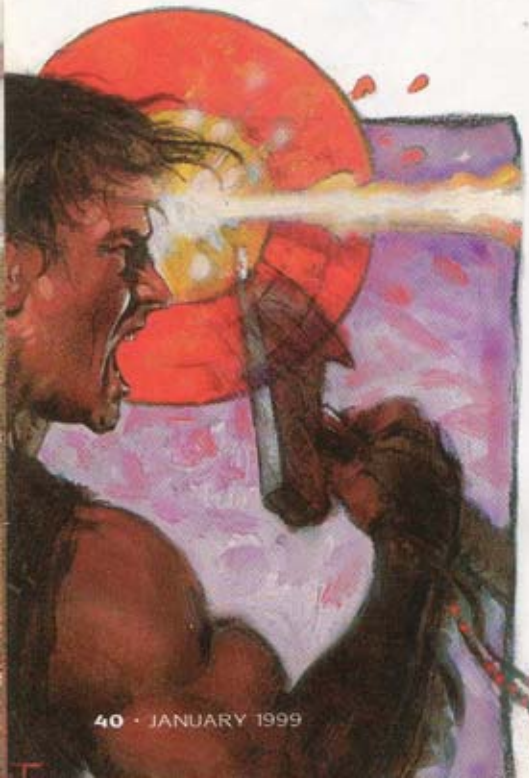
Also, the Janissary adheres to a strict code of honor. This code is an integral part of the Janissary's training, and if it is ever willingly violated the Janissary loses all the special benefits of this kit. The code has four main points.

1. A Janissary never betrays an employer. The Janissary does not abandon him even against the worst odds, nor can he be convinced or bribed to leave or act against his employer. This leads Janissaries to be cautious about whom they serve.

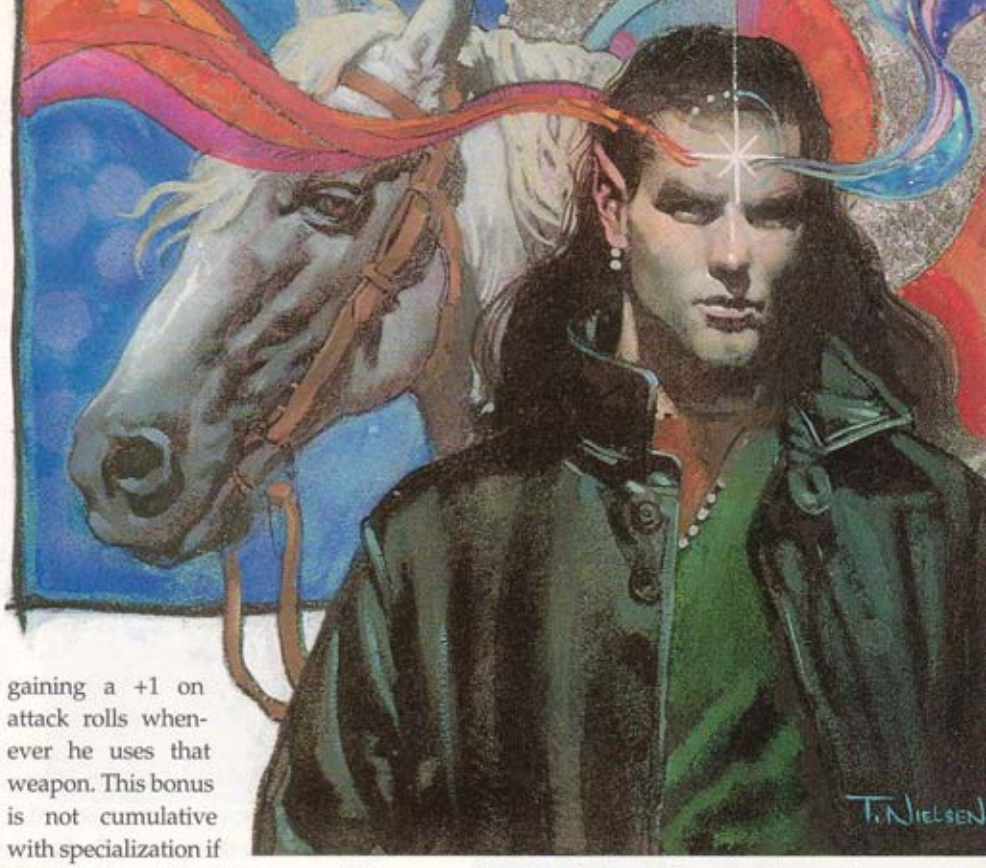
2. A Janissary always keeps his word. If a Janissary promises to do something, he strives to his death to accomplish it. This includes contracts signed by a Janissary, so he reads offers of employment very carefully.

3. The Janissary never acts in a way that reflects negatively upon his homeland. He considers himself a representative of his native culture and thus makes pains to be well groomed and polite. He avoids public displays of drunkenness or anger and shows respect to his peers and superiors.

4. The Janissary never refuses an honorable opportunity to test his fighting skills, unless doing so violates another point of his code. He is not interested in



◄ *The Militant Psionicist combines mental with physical might.*



While a Mind Mage might appear to be a Wizard, his powers are altogether different. ➤

constant fights to the death but accepts duels fought to the first strike or invitations to tournaments.

Wealth Options: The Janissary starts the game with one free weapon, generally his bonus weapon, and a Psionicist's normal 3d4 × 10 gold pieces.

militant psionicist

The Militant leads a violent life, relying on his combat skills as much as mental abilities. Psionicists often take this kit if they have low ability scores in the prime requisites, to compensate for a low PSP pool.

Races: Any race eligible to be a Psionicist may be a Militant, although most Militant Psionicists are human.

Requirements: The Militant requires a minimum Strength of 9 in addition to the normal requirements to be a Psionicist. Militants may be of any non-Chaotic alignment.

Role: The Militant is dissatisfied with the ability of psionics alone to accomplish his goals and seeks to combine this skill with some combat ability. He often sees himself as a pragmatist among dreamers.

Preferred Disciplines: Psychometabolism is preferred by some, Psychokinetics by others, and one of these two must be taken as the primary discipline. The other three disciplines are not well represented among the ranks of Militants. At most, the others contribute one or two abilities to enhance the powers from the two primary disciplines. *Combat mind, dimension blade, martial trance,* and *psychic blade* are the most common "foreign" abilities among militants.

Weapon Proficiencies: Although he does not gain extra proficiencies, the Militant suffers only a –3 nonproficiency penalty when using weapons with which he is unfamiliar. He can, however, use his second weapon proficiency to specialize in any of the fighting styles available to him: the weapon-and-shield style, one-weapon style, or two-weapon style.

At first level, the Militant can choose one weapon as a "weapon of choice," gaining a +1 on attack rolls whenever he uses that weapon. This bonus is not cumulative with specialization if the DM allows Psionicists to specialize.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The Militant can learn warrior proficiencies at no additional cost. The Militant Psionicist does not learn Contact free at first level. He must purchase it as if he were a non-Psionicist, either at first level, or later as he gains proficiency slots.

Equipment: In addition to any leather armors, the Militant can also wear metal armors up to chain mail.

Special Benefits: In addition to the armor benefits above, the Militant can choose to become proficient in certain other weapons: short bow, club, light crossbow, hand/throwing axe, javelin, sling, spear, and war club.

Special Hindrances: The Militant learns abilities slower than other Psionicists. He gains devotions and sciences as if he were four levels lower than normal. Thus, a 9th-level Militant gains the sciences and devotions of a 5th-level Psionicist. His MTHAC0, attack, and defense modes are the same as other Psionicists. For the first four levels of advancement the militant uses the chart below:

militant psionicist advancement

Level	Dis.	Sci.	Dev.
1	—	—	—
2	1	—	1
3	1	—	1
4	1	1	2

Wealth Options: Because he needs slightly more cash for armor and weapons, the militant begins play with 4d4 × 10 gp.

mind mage

The Mind Mage often travels in a world where psionics are rare, suspect, or forbidden to practice. He disguises his abilities as magic, relying on its acceptance among the common folk to conceal his exotic powers. If his powers were known, somebody would want to capture him, enslave him for use against their enemies, or simply kill him.

To avoid close examination, the Mind Mage often travels alone or with few close friends. Occasionally the Mind Mage assumes this kit voluntarily to take his foes by surprise. These Mind Mages by choice are more willing to share their secret with friends who can often help by participating in the charade. Close groups are important for voluntary Mind Mages; with their Lawful alignment and dependence on friendships, voluntary Mind Mages can be the bond that holds a tightly-knit party together.

Races: Because of the magical disguise, only elves, half-elves, gnomes, and humans become Mind Mages.

new proficiency: feign magic

General, Int −1

Some characters find it useful to appear to cast magical spells. Perhaps they wish to draw attention to themselves and give a real spellcaster time to cast a spell. They might wish to conceal the identity of a powerful magical item. They might also wish to conceal the presence of a priestly granted power, psionics, or other magic of an unusual nature. Feign Magic relies on a few handy magic-sounding phrases and movements that the caster learns well enough to utilize skillfully and confidently, as if casting a spell that requires somatic and verbal components. The caster mixes these gestures and words and pretends to cast a spell simultaneously while invoking another effect.

Normally, no proficiency check is required, since watching a person wave his hands and seeing a magic effect appear afterward is not extraordinary in a fantasy world. Suspicious characters, however, have a chance to discover the chicanery, forcing the character to make a proficiency check. If the check fails, the fraud is revealed and the viewer realizes that no magic spell was cast. He must still use intuition, deductive reasoning, or other means to determine the actual source of the unnatural effects (if any were created by another means).

The die roll is modified by −1 if the watcher is not a spellcaster, +2 if the watcher has the Spellcraft proficiency, +1 if the subject speaks four or more languages (he might recognize some of the words the pretender uses), and −2 if the character using Feign Magic has the Spellcraft proficiency. Other modifiers that are left up to the DM to decide might be invoked if the character uses the proficiency frequently (that is, a Fighter character tries to use Feign Magic every round to divert missiles from the party clerics), the NPCs are alerted to the presence of a fake in the area, or the locals are completely unaware of psionics or variant magic systems and are easily convinced of magic use.

Requirements: The Mind Mage has no special requirements beyond those required for the Psionicist class. They can be of any Lawful alignment.

Gnomes who take this kit must assume Psychokinesis as their primary discipline. They nearly always take *control light*, *control sound*, and *create sound* to mimic Illusion magic.

Role: The Mind Mage, as part of his disguise, must adopt the role of the Wizard in the party. The Mind Mage backs up the party Wizard, if any, with his psionic powers and usually stays close to the Wizard in combat. His slightly superior combat ability comes in handy for protecting the real Wizard. The Mind Mage's main goals are to stay alive and to keep his disguise intact. Aside from those, Mind Mages share no general tendencies. Each is unique.

Preferred Disciplines: Powers that mirror magical spells are scattered throughout all five disciplines. Because the telekinetic or psychoportive powers are generally mirrored by high-level spells, Mind Mages often take Clairsentience or Telepathy as a primary discipline. Mind Mages can claim that their *domination* is a *charm person*. *See magic*, *clairaudience*, and *ESP* need no special explanation. Once experienced, Mind Mages usually take Psychometabolism as their third choice (at 5th level) because of the overall usefulness of the abilities. By that point they can claim to have researched custom spells if anyone questions their abilities, as long as they are modest in their claims.

Weapon Proficiencies: To support their disguise, Mind Mages must take proficiency in either dagger, dart, or knife. They may also select the staff, a weapon not usually available to Psionicists but usable by Wizards. They may use other Psionicist weapons but may not take a proficiency in them until after 1st level.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Feign Magic (new proficiency). *Recommended:* Spellcraft.

Equipment: Mind Mages often find it easier to pretend to invoke the magic of certain items than to pretend to cast a spell. Pretending to use magical items also explains why they can use the power several times a day. Mind Mages should always have an item at hand to explain away their ability, preferably one per power, although the Mind Mage may combine similar powers into a single fake magical item. Thus, a Mind Mage might wear a gold medallion that he rubs before using *ESP* or point a wand and shout a false command word when using *detonate*.

As soon as possible, a Mind Mage acquires a spellbook, which he pretends to pore over every morning. Usually he spends an hour or so rejuvenating instead.

Mind Mages can wear armor and use shields but not without compromising their disguise.

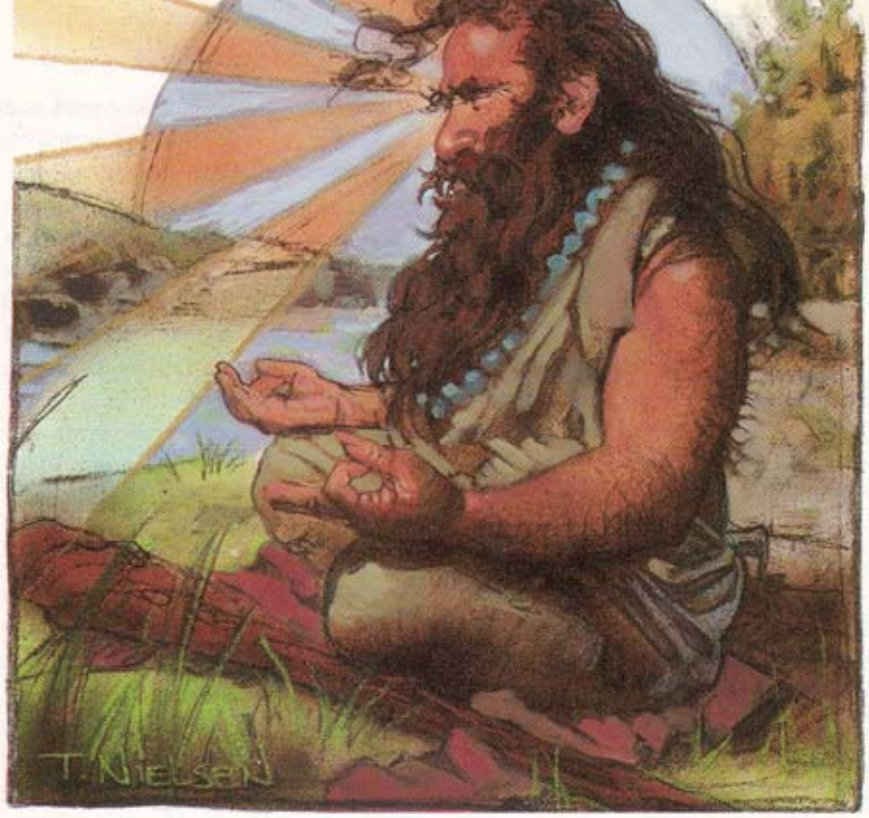
Special Benefits: This kit might be required by circumstance, in which case the DM might want to declare the existence of a secret society of Mind Mages to help the PCs out from time to time. This society is analogous to the Veiled Alliance of Athas, where preserver Wizards must hide their powers among the more common and accepted Psionicists. In either case, others are often unaware of or deny the existence of psionics. Mind Mages attempting to use a devotion or science against a creature who believes or assumes the attack to be magical may add a +2 to their MTHAC0 rolls. If the Mind Mage's disguise is penetrated and the subject knows that he is not being attacked by magic, this bonus is lost.

Mind Mages can learn Wizard proficiencies at no additional cost.

Special Hindrances: If the Mind Mage is forced to disguise his abilities for cultural reasons (persecution, law, heresy), the public knowledge of his powers can be punishable by prison, "re-education," or most likely death. Mind Mages who chose this kit because they wish to avoid the curious have less to worry about but must still convince others that they are Wizards or lose the bonus to their MTHAC0 rolls. Because of the need for secrecy, Mind Mages must choose their abilities carefully. They can have only one ability per three levels that does not mirror or closely resemble a standard spell or magical item.

Wealth Options: Mind Mages start with 2d4 × 10 gp.

Mind Monks seek enlightenment and self-perfection. ➤



mind monk

The Mind Monk is a Psionicist who is affiliated with a priesthood. Rather than concern himself with converting heathens to his faith or watching over a congregation, the Mind Monk seeks to gain enlightenment and self perfection. He sees psionics as a natural extension of his expanded wisdom and spirituality.

Mind Monks often live in secluded hermitages or wander wilderness areas in their journey toward wisdom. They act as wise men and advisors to the more traditional priests of their faith and are often sought for advice and guidance. Most Mind Monks are members of a religion emphasizing thought, self-sufficiency, peace, and wisdom.

Races: Any race that can be a Psionicist may be a Mind Monk, although most are human.

Requirements: A Mind Monk must have a Wisdom of 17 in addition to the normal requirements to be a Psionicist. They may be of any Lawful alignment, but most are Lawful Good.

Role: As an NPC, a Mind Monk makes an excellent ally for a party of PCs —a secluded sage, well versed in ancient texts and lost lore. A group of adventurers might seek out a Mind Monk for advice on how to deal with some psionic monster or any other piece of obscure knowledge. A higher level party might escort a senior Mind Monk to a treaty deliberation or other delicate negotiation, where his reputation as a fair, peaceful man is much needed.

A Mind Monk PC is usually a young initiate who has just completed his basic training. Unable to continue expanding his consciousness by pure study, he must now explore the world in which he lives. Joining an adventuring party is an excellent means to do this, especially if it already contains a Cleric of the same order as the Mind Monk.

Preferred Disciplines: Most Mind Monks choose Telepathy as their primary discipline. Clairsentience is also very common.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Club, Horseman's Mace.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Religion. *Recommended:* Harness Subconscious, Meditative Focus, Reading/Writing.

Equipment: The Mind Monk tends toward a simple existence—a robe with a few pockets for possessions, perhaps a walking stick that doubles as a club.

Special Benefits: Because of their strong connection to Priests, Mind Monks may take nonweapon proficiencies from the Priest group at no additional cost. At higher levels, Mind Monks gain access to a few Priest spells, as shown in the "Mind Monk's Spell Advancement" sidebar. These spells must be from the All, Divination, Healing, and Thought spheres.

Special Hindrances: The Mind Monk is bound by all the restrictions of a Priest of the same faith. For a Mind Monk based on the standard Cleric, this means the use of edged or pointed weapons is forbidden. These restrictions are always in addition to the limits of the Psionicist class.

As a student of mind over matter, a Mind Monk may not place importance on material possessions. He may never own more than he can carry or keep more money than he needs for modest upkeep. The remainder must be donated to a worthy cause (often the upkeep of a church or hermitage, never a PC).

Additionally, the Mind Monk must meditate, uninterrupted, for three hours every day. If this meditation is missed even once, the Mind Monk loses all the benefits of this kit until the hours are made up. If the Mind Monk continues to miss meditation, he loses access to one randomly selected psionic devotion each day until the hours are made up.

Wealth Options: The Mind Monk starts with 1d4 × 10 gp.

mind monk's spell advancement

Mind Monk's Level	Casting Level	Priest Spell Levels 1	2	3
8	1	1	—	—
9	2	2	—	—
10	3	2	1	—
11	4	2	2	—
12	5	2	2	1
13	6	3	2	1
14	7	3	2	2
15	8	3	3	2
16*	9	3	3	3

*Maximum Spell Ability

paranaturalist

A Paranaturalist is an oddity in a society that knows almost nothing about psionics. He has tapped his own psionic powers and trained himself with the aid of knowledge obtained from ancient, musty tomes. Because of this, the Paranaturalist has come to realize there are creatures and mysteries beyond the understanding of conventional sages. Thus he seeks out the unknown and strange, both to understand the universe better and to oppose those horrors others cannot comprehend.

Races: Any race capable of being a Psionicist may be a Paranaturalist.

Requirements: A Paranaturalist must have a Constitution of at least 15 and an Intelligence of at least 14, in addition to the normal requirements to be a Psionicist. They may be of any Lawful alignment.

Role: An NPC Paranaturalist is most likely to be encountered by the PCs while creeping through old tombs and ruins. If he is on a mission that is compatible with the PCs, he may offer to join forces with them. If the PCs' mission conflicts with his, he is likely to warn them off. ("You don't understand the forces you're trifling with ...") The PCs might seek out a Paranaturalist they had heard of to aid them with a mystery they cannot solve on their own.

A PC Paranaturalist is a benefit to any adventuring party, with a unique set of powers and lore. Although more concerned with the unknown and forgotten than in treasure and adventure, a Paranaturalist can see the advantages to travelling with a large group, as long as they are willing to investigate the occasional lost city or unfathomable mystery.

Preferred Disciplines: None (see Special Benefits).

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus*: None. *Recommended*: Dagger, Hand Crossbow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus*: Ancient History, Reading/Writing. *Recommended*: Astrology, Local History, Religion, Survival.

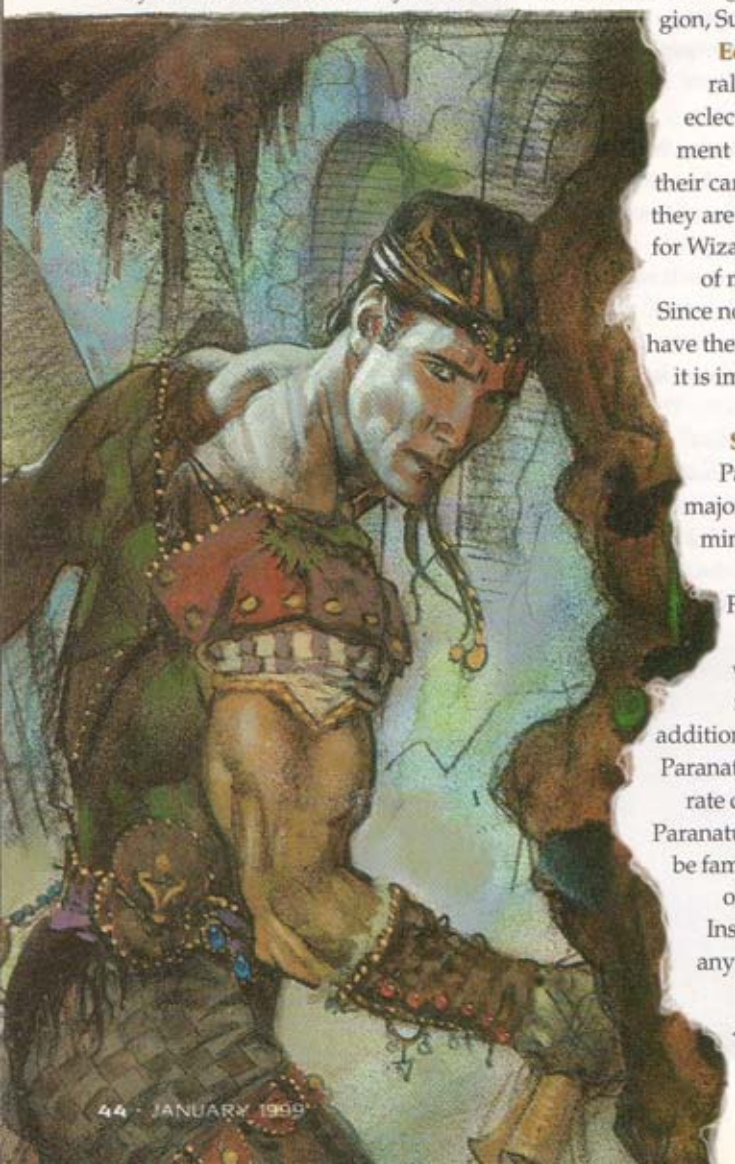
Equipment: Paranaturalists tend to gather an eclectic and varied assortment of equipment during their careers. Because of this, they are sometimes mistaken for Wizards with pockets full of material components. Since no two Paranaturalists have the same odd collection, it is impossible to list items likely to be carried.

Special Benefits: The Paranaturalist has two major benefits, both stemming from his broad but informal education. First, the Paranaturalist can choose nonweapon proficiencies from any group at no additional cost. Secondly, the Paranaturalist does not separate disciplines. In fact, the Paranaturalist might not even be familiar with the concept of different disciplines. Instead, he is free to pick any sciences or devotions he wishes, regardless of discipline, as long as he meets the requirements for each power. The normal restrictions preventing a character from knowing more sciences than disciplines also do not apply to the Paranaturalist.

Special Hindrances: Because the Paranaturalist is self-taught, his understanding of his own powers is incomplete. Because of this, he does not automatically gain new psionic powers upon attaining new levels. Rather, the Paranaturalist must find descriptions of psionic powers in books of lore and ancient scrolls, much as a Wizard must find new spells.

The Paranaturalist begins play with a full complement of psionic powers, but after that it is up to the DM to decide what powers he finds and where he finds them. Alternatively, a DM may allow a Paranaturalist to research new psionic powers, but this is sure to be costly and time consuming. As a general rule, the Paranaturalist shouldn't be more than one science and two devotions short of the normal number of powers for a Psionicist of his level.

Wealth Options: The Paranaturalist character begins play with 6d4 × 10 gp worth of equipment but may not have more than 5 gp in money. Any additional money not used to buy equipment is lost.



THE PARANATURALIST IS NOT BOUND BY THE CONCEPTS OF SCIENCES AND DEVOTIONS.

pioneer

The Pioneer stands at the cutting edge of psionic knowledge. Learning all that there is to know is not enough for him; he still demands more.

Races: The Pioneer kit is open to any race, although halflings and dwarves are rarely Pioneers.

Requirements: The Pioneer is sometimes at odds with the tight restrictions of Lawful alignments. Since breaking new ground often requires breaking tradition, the Pioneer is not allowed to be Lawful. Since all Psionicists are barred from Chaotic alignments, the Pioneer must be Neutral, although he can be Good, Evil, or True Neutral.

Role: The Pioneer is dedicated to making psionics as far-reaching and expansive as magic. He is the social opposite of

the Mind Mage, who seeks to hide his powers. The Pioneer would like to see psionics reach across the face of the world, affecting all aspects of life.

Preferred Disciplines: Since they must have a thorough knowledge of psionics, Pioneers choose from across the board when it comes to selecting abilities. Like all Psionicists, they often choose as their primary discipline one that offers the greatest selection of sciences and devotions, but some choose a smaller discipline because they believe that it holds room for expansion.

Weapon Proficiencies: Because of his inward dedication, the Pioneer has only one weapon proficiency at first level.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required*: Reading/Writing. New knowledge is useless if it cannot be recorded, either for personal use or for the use of others. Evil Pioneers keep a record of their achievements only until they perfect their new abilities, and then they destroy them. Good Pioneers often make copies and circulate them among friends and allies. Unlike Wizards, once the Psionicist learns an ability, the written lesson is no longer necessary.

Equipment: The Pioneer is always learning, and taking notes is necessary for all but the most brilliant (Int 19 or higher). Therefore, the Pioneer must have a supply of paper and writing instruments handy most of the time. A Pioneer who loses his notes on his current topic of study can reconstruct from memory 2d4 × 10 percent of his work (20–80%); the rest is lost.

Special Benefits: The Pioneer specializes in learning new things. Thus, he continually attempts to improve or create psionic abilities. Sometime during 1st level, the Pioneer decides which ability he wishes to modify or create. This decision can be made based on a desired but unavailable power, feedback during adventures, or other factors. This initial stage is known as awareness, where the character notices a lack or fault and understands that the ability has room for improvement. The character cannot advance to 2nd level until this decision is made. The player should discuss this project with the DM, just like spell research, to decide on a balanced ability that does not disrupt game play.

At 2nd level, the Pioneer undertakes analysis, during which he develops an outline for study and research to perfect the ability. Having decided that a problem exists, the Pioneer must create a solution. At this stage, the Pioneer may change his mind about which ability he is researching, but he must begin again at the awareness stage if he does so. He does not go back to 1st level but is forever a stage behind in his research.

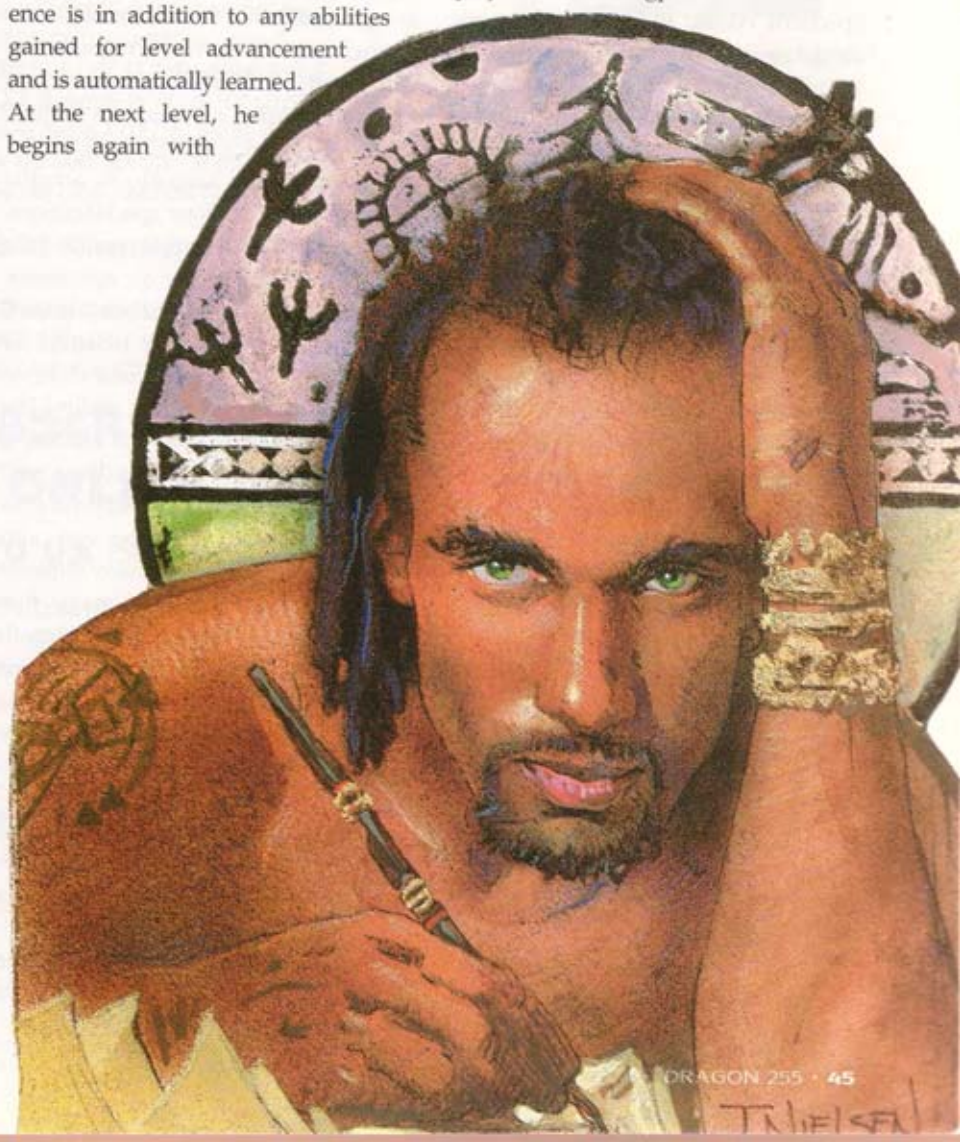
At 3rd level, the Pioneer develops the modification or new power that the character desires. If the project is a modification or creation of a devotion, the process of meditation requires only 1 level. If a science is being altered or created, meditation requires 2 levels. Again, the Pioneer may change his mind and begin again at awareness if he chooses, with no penalty other than the lost work.

At 4th level (or after the mediation is finished), the Psionicist achieves realization. As soon as realization is achieved, the Pioneer gains the new ability and can use it immediately. This devotion or science is in addition to any abilities gained for level advancement and is automatically learned. At the next level, he begins again with awareness and the process continues.

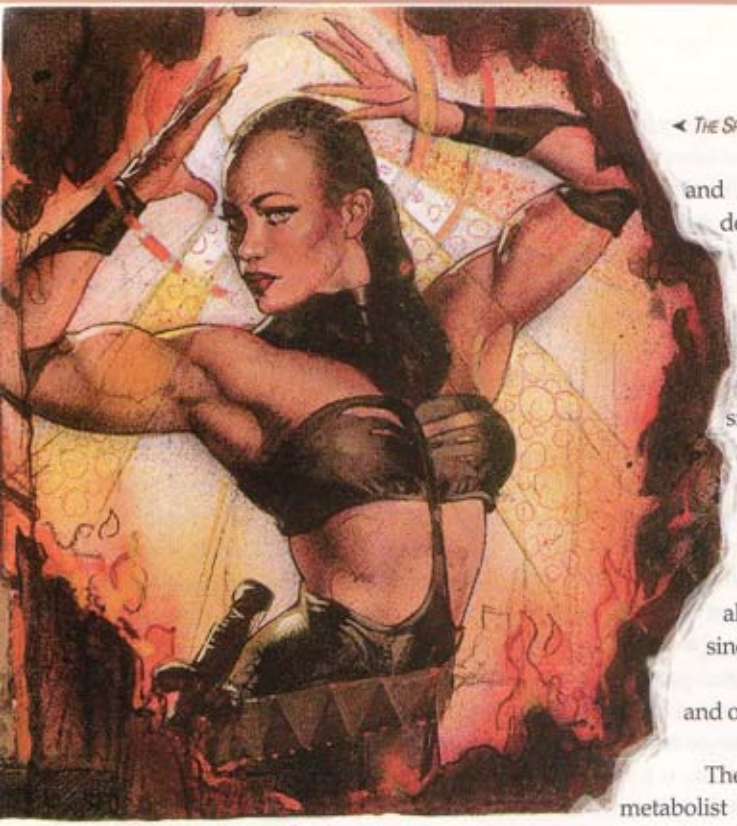
Also, the Pioneer begins to attract students as soon as he develops his first new power, rather than waiting until 9th level. These students follow the rules given in *Players Option®: Skills & Powers* or *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, with one addition: each of them wants to learn one ability unique to the Pioneer that they sought out.

Special Hindrances: Because the Pioneer seeks to expand the limits of knowledge rather than the depth of knowledge, he usually obtains only a superficial understanding of any given field. Because he is not as thorough as other Psionicists, he has a –1 MTHAC0 when using any science or devotion, regardless of discipline. This penalty does not apply to attacks or defenses.

Wealth Options: The Pioneer, in his search for new things, often tries get-rich-quick schemes. Most Pioneers, therefore, start with only 1d6 × 10 gp. One in ten, however, has had success with one of these schemes and begins play with 1d6 × 50 gp.



The Pioneer expands the knowledge of psionic powers. ➤



◄ *The Specialist Psionicist dedicates herself to a single discipline.*

specialist psionicist

The Specialist Psionicist is similar to a Specialist Wizard in that he favors one discipline over the others, just as the Wizard favors one school of magic over the others. The Specialist Psionicist, however, uses his chosen discipline to the exclusion of the other schools. He is an unequaled master in his capabilities within that school but has no access to powers from other disciplines.

Races: The Specialist kit is open to any race, although most Specialists are human.

Requirements: The Specialist Psionicist kit has no alignment requirements, but those races with the least aptitude for psionics—elves and dwarves—do not like to restrict themselves to one discipline and rarely specialize.

Role: Each Specialist Psionicist fills a different niche depending on his area of expertise.

Preferred Disciplines: Psychokinetics, Psychometabolism, and Telepathy are almost exclusively chosen as specialized disciplines because of the relative numbers of available sciences and devotions. These Specialist Psionicists have the most skills available to them and have a variety of ways to apply their skills. A Specialist Psionicist from the other schools has few abilities to work with, and little in the way of defense or attack capability.

A Specialist Psychokineticist is skilled in combat, especially against a single powerful opponent (psionic abilities tend to affect small areas compared to magic spells). He could also be a good all-around adventurer, since his skills are useful in dealing with traps and other obstacles as well as living opponents. The Specialist Psychometabolist is a good fighter when he has a chance to augment his natural skills with psionics. He might work as a gladiator, guard, assassin, or bounty hunter. He is also good at avoiding or escaping traps, although he is not as good as the Psychokineticist for removing the threat of the traps for the entire party. The Psychometabolist is a good adventurer, although he is quite skilled when acting alone as well.

The Specialist Telepath is actually between the other four specializations. The Telepath has no actual combat skills that can inflict damage on opponents, but he can render them helpless or seriously reduce their ability to attack or defend themselves. Communication, on the other hand, is his key ability. The Specialist Telepath makes a good spy, since he is able to transmit discovered information immediately, but he is a far better spymaster, since he can also receive information from many different nonpsionics without using magic that can be blocked or detected. The Telepath can find party members who have been isolated from the group by magic or traps, keep in close touch with a scout, or confuse enemies by sowing misinformation directly into their brains.

A character would choose a limited discipline like Clairsentience or Psychoportation only if he were guaranteed a position in a strong government, religious organization, or military force where he could afford to specialize in a noncombative position and be assured of adequate protection from those who would stop him. The Specialist Clairsentient might be a spy from a safe distance, an investigator, or auditor of sorts. The Specialist Psychoporter could work as a herald, courier, messenger, scout, or even a guard (although his function would be warning of attack rather than protection from it).

Weapon Proficiencies: Specialists can take any weapon proficiencies allowed by the general Psionicist class. They have no unique restrictions.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Prohibited*: Meditative Focus. Since this proficiency relies on drawing attention away from an ability the Specialist Psionicist does not have (other disciplines), he has no pool with which to reinforce his chosen discipline.

Equipment: Specialists need no unusual mundane equipment. Whenever possible, they use magic to correct shortcomings in their skills caused by the inability to choose from other fields. Thus, a telepath might want a pair of *boots of speed* to move around and magic armor to protect him. This reliance on magic incurs a certain low-level contempt from other Psionicists.

Special Benefits: Specialist Psionicists are extremely skilled in the application of their discipline. At each level where a Psionicist could normally gain access to a second or subsequent discipline, the Specialist Psionicist instead receives a +1 to MTHAC0 rolls within his selected discipline. Thus, at 2nd, 6th, 10th, and 14th levels, the Specialist Psionicist gains a +1, +2, +3, and finally +4 to all MTHAC0 rolls that apply to all of his abilities, either sciences or devotions.

Special Hindrances: The Specialist Psionicist is limited by the exclusivity of his discipline. Since he cannot choose abilities outside of his discipline, he is forced to use ingenuity and cleverness to accomplish what generalist Psionicists do by choosing an ability from another field. At higher levels, despite their power, Specialist Psionicists often find themselves jealous of even the simple abilities of generalist Psionicists.

Wealth Options: Specialists begin play with the standard amount of gold.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

IS A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

WHY HAVEN'T YOU SUBSCRIBED YET??

QUIT YER SNIBBLING!! I AIN'T GOT NO TEARS FOR YOU!! ANYONE STUPID ENOUGH TO STICK THEIR HEAD IN A HOLE IN THE WALL TO HAVE A QUICK LOOK-SEE DESERVES WHAT YOU GOT!!
DON'T WORRY NEWT!! FIRE BLOSSOM SCRAPES UP YOUR BRAIN-GOO AND CAREFULLY PLACES IT IN YOUR HELMET!!
(SNICKER) REVENGE IS SWEET!! NOTHING LIKE A 5 MACE OF BASHING TO MAKE SOMEONE'S HEAD EXPLODE LIKE A RIPE WATERMELON!!
ESPECIALLY WHEN BRANDISHED BY A HILL GIANT!! DON'T FORGET - WE STILL HAVE TO PAY HIM FOR HIS SERVICES!!
SOB!! SNORT!!

IN ADDITION TO ORIGINAL STORIES OF YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS, KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ MAGAZINE FEATURES OTHER ARTICLES OF INTEREST TO GAMERS INCLUDING:

- **TALES FROM THE TABLE**: FUNNY STORIES OF LIFE AT THE GAMING TABLE
- **A GAMER'S VIEW OF THE MOVIES**: MOVIE REVIEWS FOR GUYS LIKE US
- **HEARD IT ON THE GAMEVINE**: GAME VINE IS A COLUMN WHERE YOU CAN PUT AN EAR TO THE WALL AND CATCH UP ON WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE GAME INDUSTRY. MONTH TO MONTH WE PLUCK CHOICE BITS OF NEWS, GOSSIP AND RUMOR AND GATHER THEM TOGETHER TO RUN HERE FOR YOUR READING ENJOYMENT.
- **BRIAN'S SMALL PRESS PICKS**: MR. VAN HOOSE REVIEWS THE BEST OF SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS.
- **WEIRD PETE'S BULLETIN BOARD**: YOUR CHANCE TO SEND A SHOUT OUT TO YOUR GAMING BUDDIES OR LEAVE A CRYPTIC MESSAGE FOR AGENT MOLEINSKI.
- **PARTING SHOTS**: MISCELLANEOUS JOKES AND FUN STUFF

WHAT ABOUT THOSE EARLY COMICS BOOKS?? WELL, **BUNDLE OF TROUBLE** VOLUME ONE IS A NEWLY RELEASED COMPILATION OF ISSUES 1-3. PICK IT AND FIND OUT WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT!!

DID YA KNOW KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE 1990?? **TALES FROM THE VAULT** IS YOUR CHANCE TO GET THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF EARLY KODT STRIPS AND DRAGON APPEARANCES THROUGH ISSUE #236.

A ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION (12 ISSUES) IS ONLY $32.00!!!

(US $36.00 IN CANADA AND US $50 OVERSEAS)

AVAILABLE WHEREVER **KODT** IS SOLD!! IF YOU DON'T SEE IT, ASK FOR IT!!

To purchase a subscription, sample issue ($3.50), **Tales from the Vault** ($9.95 + $2 s/h) or **Bundle of Trouble** vol. 1 ($9.95 + $2 s/h), send a check or money order (made payable to **Kenzer and Company**) to:

Kenzer & Company
Mail Order Fulfillments
2094 Camino a los Cerros, Menlo Park, CA 94025

or fax a valid Visa, MasterCard, or Discover card number, your signature, card type and expiration date to us at **(650) 233-8270** or E-mail the same information to us at **kenzerco@aol.com**

Knights of the Dinner Table™ magazine was voted **Best Professional Games Magazine** by the **YOU** the gaming public!! Thanks!!

E-mail: kenzerco@aoi.com

On the Web: http://members.aol.com/relkin/kenzerco.html

© Copyright 1998 Kenzer and Company. All rights reserved.
Legal Notice: The Kenzer and Company Logo, Tales from the Vault, Bundle of Trouble, Knights of the Dinner Table and all prominent characters and likenesses thereof are trademarks of Kenzer and Company.

◀ *The Voice is the ultimate messenger and ambassador.*

voice

The Voice is a highly prized messenger and emissary in campaigns where psionic abilities are at least tolerated. Using the telepathic power *mindlink*, the Voice can contact his patron during negotiations and is thus able to speak in his exact words. Often hired by the rich and powerful, the Voice allows his employer to carry on real-time conversations with people who are hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Often, a Voice is hired to represent someone in a far off or dangerous land. The Voice undertakes both the risk and time of the journey, allowing whoever sent him to remain in safety and accomplish other tasks.

Races: Any race able to be a Psionicist may take the Voice kit.

Requirements: The Voice has no special requirements beyond those of the Psionicist class.

Role: As an NPC, the Voice is most often encountered while on a mission. Frequently these missions take the Voice into dangerous lands, possibly forcing him to hire a band of adventurous PCs to protect him. If the PCs have powerful but cautious enemies, they may find a Voice has been sent to them with a warning or threat.

A Voice PC makes a great adventure hook if the other PCs are willing to accompany him on the occasional mission. If the PCs have a powerful NPC patron or ally, he might send a PC Voice along with them as a convenient way to keep track of them.

Preferred Disciplines: The Voice must choose Telepathy as his primary discipline and must choose *mindlink* as his first science. Psychoportation is a common secondary discipline, but any may be chosen.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Dagger, Short Bow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Language, Modern (any two). *Recommended:* Reading/Writing, Riding.

Equipment: A Voice travels as lightly as possible. Large weapons, armor, or bags are avoided, as they slow the character down. Many Voices have a horse.

Special Benefits: The Voice is a master of the psionic power *mindlink*. He is trained in this power more than is any other Psionicist because *mindlink* is the basis for everything a Voice does. As a result, the Voice receives a +5 bonus when attempting to use *mindlink* to contact a willing target, and he can maintain it at half the normal PSP cost.

When on a paid mission, a Voice is generally accepted to have political neutrality. Unless he takes actions of a violent or subversive nature, a Voice is allowed to pass unmolested through the lands of even an evil ruler, provided he has authentic documentation to vouch for his current employment.

Special Hindrances: The Voice is a messenger and sometimes ambassador, constantly on the move. Because this work is not particularly glamorous and the Voice never settles down, he never attracts followers of any type.

Wealth Options: The Voice starts with 3d6 × 10 gp starting money.

additional reading

The fiction bibliography at the back of *The Complete Psionics Handbook* lists a number of wonderful books to read for ideas on Psionicists. Here are some additional recommendations for anyone considering running a European-style game with Psionicists.

Herbert, Frank. Dune Series: *Dune, The Children of Dune, The Heretic of Dune, God-Emperor of Dune.*

Lackey, Mercedes. Heralds of Valdemar trilogy: *Arrows of the Queen, Arrow's Flight, Arrow's Fall;* The Last Herald Mage trilogy: *Magic's Pawn, Magic's Promise, Magic's Price; By the Sword.*

McCaffrey, Anne. *Get off the Unicorn, To Ride the Pegasus.*

McKinley, Robin. *The Blue Sword.*

Norton, Andre. *Beastmaster.*

Smith, E.E. Lensman series: *Triplanetary, First Lensman, Galactic Patrol, Gray Lensman, Second Stage Lensman, Children of the Lens.*

Lloyd Brown III is the chief Psionicist of Jacksonville, FL, and Owen K. C. Stephens is the head of the Norman, OK Charcoal Burners Guild. We know they had to be using psionic powers when they collaborated on this article, since they weren't even aware they were doing it.

AMAZING® STORIES

First in the past. First in the future.

First to unite visions of the past with the stories of the future.

AMAZING STORIES *magazine~ Your first choice for the best in science fiction.*

Charter subscribers save up to 50% off the cover price!

▼ *Fill out and mail with your payment to this address:*

NAME (*please print*)_____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE/PROV_____

COUNTRY_____ ZIP/POSTAL CODE_____

TELEPHONE (____)_____ EMAIL _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT

☐ CHECK (payable to *Amazing Stories*)

☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ DISCOVER ☐ BILL ME (*must be 18 or over*)

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____

MC BANK NO._____ EXPIRATION DATE_____

SIGNATURE_____ DATE _____

To U.S. addresses
- ☐ 4 issues for $10.95
- ☐ 8 issues for $19.95
- ☐ 12 issues for $29.95

To Canadian addresses
- ☐ 4 issues for $14.95
- ☐ 8 issues for $29.95
- ☐ 12 issues for $44.95

To European addresses*
- ☐ 4 issues for £9.95 (4001H)
- ☐ 8 issues for £19.95 (8001M)
- ☐ 12 issues for £29.95 (1201J)

U.S. FUNDS ONLY

Amazing® Stories
Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
P.O. Box 469107
Escondido, CA 92046-9107
or fax: 619-738-4805

***Send European orders to:**
MRM Promotional Services Ltd.
P.O. Box 503
Leicester
LE94 DAD
United Kingdom
Phone: 44-185-841-0510

For fast service, email us at
amazing@pcspublink.com.

For credit card orders, call
1-800-395-7760
(M–F 9AM–5PM PST)
and mention code AAS98

All prices are subject to change without notice. Subscription offer expires 3/31/99

Amazing is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. © 1998 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Illustration by Bob Eggleton.

A983

The Shadow

The Deadly Combination of Psionics and Ninjutsu

by Samuel M. Wright illustrated by David Kooharian

Ayume eyed her prey from across the castle courtyard. *He was a minor courtier of the stubborn Daimyo Ozaki who had refused to heed the Emperor's edicts. Ayume reached out with her mind, and the courtier returned her gaze, hypnotized. "The daimyo is not what he appears to be," Ayume whispered into his mind. "He is in fact an evil ninja in disguise. He is mocking you, laughing at your ignorance. You must kill him quickly. You must eliminate this vile impostor!"*

In the advisor's weak mind, his lord took on monstrous mien and laughed at him with a mocking evil. The courtier shrieked, "Impostor!" He was without fear for the first time in his life, striking down the old daimyo with a ceremonial dagger before the unsuspecting guards could respond. But respond they did, slaying the bureaucrat with ease, though too late to save their lord.

The guards stood staring at the two dead nobles in dismay. Why had the faithful servant called their lord an impostor? Why had the meek courtier turned violent? Was the courtier possessed by a demon? Was he simply mad? Now they would never know, as both men lay dead. Ayume knew the answer to their question, but she just smiled and walked through the castle wall unnoticed. Passersby looked right past her, despite her miraculous passage through stone and wood.

The enigmatic ninjas were said to have many powers—to turn invisible, create illusions, walk on water, and pass through walls—powers that made the common folk dread them. In reality, these were just applications of incredible skill and cunning. In a fantasy milieu, these powers may exceed human talent by far.

The Complete Ninja's Handbook introduced the Spirit Warrior and Shinobi Wizards to portray fantasy versions of real ninjas. But in the Orient, magic is not the only way to express these mystical powers, and psionic abilities have obvious connections to the mental powers attributed to many characters of Oriental legend. The exotic reputation of the Orient has long pervaded the imagination, and much of what inspired the idea of psionics in the first place were tales of fakirs, monks, and ninjas, the masters of strange powers not heard of in the West. Ninja kits that employ psionics are a short step from there.

The Mindclouder Ninja Kit

Qualifications: Wis 13+; humans, korobokuru, and spirit folk.

Description and Role: The Mindclouder is a psionic Ninja who acts in much the same manner as the spell-wielding Spirit Warrior (described in the *Complete Ninja's Handbook*). A specialist in Telepathy, the Mindclouder uses his powerful will to gather information, control pawns, and remain anonymous. High-level Mindclouders can even kill with the force of their minds, driving targets to suicide or turning those near their target into unwitting assassins.

Secondary Skills: Scribe.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Dagger or Knife.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Read/Write, Psionic Lore.

Special Benefits: The Mindclouder has access to proficiencies from the Psionicist proficiency group without cost penalties. Mindclouders gain psionic abilities as they progress in levels, starting at 1st level with access to the Telepathy discipline. They progress at their own rate, gaining attack and defense modes automatically at certain levels. (See table on page 53.)

Way

Special Hindrances: Mindclouders have the same armor and weapon restrictions as Spirit Warriors: They may use only the dagger, knife, tanto, yoroi-toshi, short sword, ninja-to, staff, dart, blowgun, or sling. They may wear only leather or padded armor and may not carry shields. Mindclouders gain experience and hit points as Psionicists. Because their training forces them to spend less time studying and meditating than does a true Psionicist, Mindclouders gain only 75% of the PSPs they would gain each level after 1st as Psionicists, and they suffer a –2 penalty to their power score rolls.

The Shinobi Psionicist Kit

Qualifications: Wis 15+; humans, korobokuru, and spirit folk.

Description and Role: Ninja clans often employ Shinobi Psionicists, who are usually telepaths like the Mindclouder but often specialize in Clairsentience or another discipline. Though less adept in the Way than other Psionicists, Shinobi Psionicists also possess minor Ninja abilities. The Shinobi Psionicist, like the Shinobi Mage, is often an advisor to the clan leader and sees to the spiritual requirements of the Ninja clan's members, much like a Priest. Ninja clans that use Psionicists often use them entirely instead of spell-casting characters such as Shinobi Wizards and Priests.

Secondary Skills: Scribe

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Read/Write, Psionic Lore.

Special Benefits: Shinobi Psionicists can learn some thieving skills, receiving Move Silently, Detect Noise, and Read Languages at a base 10% chance each (modified by all racial bonuses and penalties) at 1st level. They gain 10 discretionary points to divide among their skills at each subsequent level.

They also receive psionic attack modes for free at the same rate a normal Psionicist receives defense modes.

Special Hindrances: Because the Shinobi Psionicist spends part of his time training in Thief abilities, his psionic powers are limited, and he gains PSPs as

though his Wisdom were two points lower than it actually is.

Note: A Shinobi Psionicist's followers are always Mindclouders or Shinobi Psionicists.

New Powers for the Shadow Way

Direct Internal Energy

(Psychometabolic Devotion)
Power Score: Con
Initial Cost: Variable
Maintenance Cost: Variable
Range: 0
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: Personal
Prerequisites: Three proficiency slots in any martial arts style, 3rd level

Description: This power allows a Psionicist to increase the effectiveness of his martial arts attacks using psionic power. This translates into a bonus of +1 to hit and damage per 3 PSPs spent, to a maximum bonus of +5. The effects of this power benefit all unarmed attacks performed by the Psionicist for one round. It also lets ch'i powers from the user's class or kit be used at +1 level per 10 PSPs spent.

Power Score—Cost is reduced to 3 PSPs per turn, instead of per round.

20—The Psionicist loses all special class-related (or ch'i, if using *Oriental Adventures*) powers for one day.

Telepathic Disguise

(Telepathic devotion)
Power Score: Int –7
Initial Cost: Contact
Maintenance Cost: 3/round/creature
Range: 100 yards
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: Individual
Prerequisites: *Hallucination, invisibility*

Description: This psionic power allows the mentalist to manufacture a representation of himself within the minds of all those who see him, a projected self-image that supersedes his actual appearance in his targets' minds. Just as with the *invisibility* devotion (the absence of any appearance in the minds of others), the psionic character operating this power must contact the intellects of all the creatures and characters whom he intends to delude by the operation of this uncommon power, and only characters within 100 yards may be affected by this power.

The Psionicist who wields this power can alter his appearance or the appearance of another, creating the image of anything approximately the same size as the person being disguised. So a Psionicist could simply alter the clothing and armor of himself or another, or alter race, age, sex, physique, or even the apparent substance of the target, making the person appear to be a statue or a mere shadow. In other respects this power operates in the same way as psionic *invisibility*.

Power Score—The altered character even feels and smells appropriate to his disguise when examined by affected individuals.

20—All contacts are broken.

Cascade Contact

(Telepathic Science)
Power Score: Wis –3
Initial Cost: Contact
Maintenance Cost: Special
Range: Special
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: Special
Prerequisites: Contact, *convergence*, 10th level

Description: This power allows a Psionicist to turn contacted targets into amplifiers for telepathic powers, using each person affected to contact several other people, and so on, in a continually growing web of control. Each person contacted by the Psionicist using this power must make a saving throw vs. spell. If the saving throw fails, the target's own life energy is used to make an invisible aura around him that causes the minds of those who enter it to open without the need for a psionic attack. This effect does not work if the targets are wary of the trap, as any effort to block it automatically succeeds, but those who are unaware of the aura may be contacted for 0 PSP cost.

One person per point of Wisdom of the original contactee can be affected by his aura, and each affected person adds 25% his own Wisdom to this effect, rounded down. For every 5 points of Wisdom possessed by each contacted mind, the user of this power gains 1 PSP upon contact and drains 1 point per turn from each contacted mind. Because of the mental processes involved in activating this power, these PSPs can be channeled only into telepathic powers, not powers of other disciplines.

Power Score—The user of the *cascade* can *psychic drain* any contacted mind.

20—All Contacts are broken.

Weapon Manipulation

(Telekinetic Devotion)
Power Score: Wis –3
Initial Cost: 7
Maintenance Cost: 2/round
Range: Touch
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: One weapon
Prerequisites: *Control body, weapon awareness*

Description: This psionic power can enhance the fighting ability of a Psionicist who has access to it, improving

the user's swing when wielding a weapon. With every swing of a weapon, this power acts as an amplification of the Psionicist's Strength score for the purpose of determining damage rolls with melee weapons. The Psionicist's Strength rises to 18/00 or by +2, whichever is higher, solely for purposes of calculating melee weapon damage.

Furthermore, because the *weapon manipulation* power moves the Psioncisist's weapon at a much accelerated speed and stops it at the end of the swing, the weapon's speed factor is reduced by 2, to a minimum of 1.

Power Score—The Psionicist's Strength damage bonuses are raised to equal a Strength score of 21 or +5 Strength, whichever is higher, and the weapon's speed factor is reduced by a full five points, to a minimum of 1.

20—The weapon wielder loses control of his weapon's finer movements and receives penalties equal to what his bonuses would have been.

Weapon Awareness

(Clairsentient Devotion)
Power Score: Wis – 3
Initial Cost: 5
Maintenance Cost: 1/round
Range: Touch
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: One weapon
Prerequisites: *Object reading, combat mind*

Description: This power enhances the accuracy of the Psionicist's attacks by extending his awareness through his weapon. Thus, the user of this power can "home-in" on targets to strike more accurately, gaining a bonus to hit equal to his Wisdom adjustment to saving throws. This bonus is also conferred upon initiative, as the Psionicist has greater awareness of and control over his weapon. Using this devotion, the Psionicist can parry any type of attack by a normal weapon, even missile weapons, without penalty, and suffers only a –1 attack penalty when blinded or facing invisible enemies.

Power Score—The user attacks as if his Wisdom score were 18 or 2 points higher than usual, whichever is higher, for calculating this devotion's bonuses.

20—The martial artist's perceptions are fogged, bestowing a penalty equal to what his bonus would be and increasing the blind combat attack penalty to –6.

Telekinetic Projectile

(Psychokinetic Devotion)
Power Score: Con –3/–4/–5
Initial Cost: 12
Maintenance Cost: 3/round
Range: 60'/90'/120'
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: Special
Prerequisites: *Ballistic attack, telekinetic shield*

Description: A coruscating, projectile-shaped force field appears under the Psionicist's control. The projectile constructed by the mind of the user can be used to replace any of the regular attacks the user has each round, at his own THAC0. Blows struck by this projectile inflict 1d6 points of damage plus one point per level of the Psionicist. The projectile may be shaped into any thrown or launched weapon.

Power Score—The weapon acquires a +3 to hit bonus and all ranges to 240 feet are considered short range.

20—The projectile is unstable, firing off in a random direction and shattering on impact for 2d6 points of damage.

Telekinetic Shield

(Psychokinetic Devotion)
Power Score: Con –1
Initial Cost: 9
Maintenance Cost: 1/round
Range: 5 feet
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: Special
Prerequisites: *Inertial barrier, deflect*

Description: This psychokinetic devotion was developed by Psionicists to protect against physical attacks. When activated, the *telekinetic shield* power projects a softly glowing solid force field—a field comparable to that fabricated by the *telekinetic barrier* power but in the form of a movable, personal defense screen that appears before the Psionicist to turn aside frontal attacks in much the same way as does the Wizard spell *shield*. The force field is a circular, slightly convex shield 5 feet in diameter. The *telekinetic shield* moves with the Psionicist, 3 feet ahead of him, improving frontal Armor Class by 3.

Power Score—Maintenance cost is free for one turn, and the user is immune to normal missiles and melee weapons.

20—The shield is flawed, shattering from any blow. AC is unimproved, and everyone within 5 feet of the shield when it shatters is knocked to the ground and must spend one round recovering from the blow.

Mindclouder Psionic Progression

Ninja Level	Total Disc.	Total Sci.	Total Dev.	Defense Modes	Attack Modes
1	1	1	3	1	1
2	2	1	5	1	1
3	2	2	6	2	2
4	2	2	7	2	2
5	2	3	8	3	3
6	3	3	9	3	3
7	3	4	10	4	4
8	3	4	11	4	4
9	3	5	12	5	5
10	3	5	12	5	5
11	3	5	13	5	5
12	4	6	13	5	5
13	4	6	14	5	5
14	4	6	14	5	5
15	4	6	15	5	5
16	4	7	15	5	5
17	4	7	16	5	5
18	4	7	16	5	5
19	4	7	16	5	5
20*	4	8	17	5	5

*Maximum number of powers

Sam Wright is a fan of all things ancient and fantastic, including elves, Klingons, Wookies, and his hero, Guillem de Gellone, the King of Septimania.

CANDLEKEEP

Bringing the Fabled Castle to Life

by CHRIS AVELLONE

illustrated by Black Isle Studios

Candlekeep hummed through the driving rain.

The clatter and splash of the horses' hooves as they struck the drenched stones of the Way of the Lion did nothing to mask the drone. The sound was faint at first, but practitioners of the Art can orient themselves to Candlekeep simply by feeling the strata of wards woven into the stones of the fortress. • *The thing most travelers see are the tall spires of its inner citadel and the flames dancing within as the scribes go about their research.* • *As we neared the main gate, I checked to make sure the books I had brought were securely wrapped. I was anxious to relieve myself of a tome I had purchased in Beregost. One of the sages, Gorion, had commissioned me to find the tome and deliver it to him—a task I was as anxious to see done as he no doubt was, for then I could sleep for several months in a warm, dry bed.*

Candlekeep

FORGOTTEN REALMS

Baldur's Gate™

Baldur's Gate is the highly anticipated FORGOTTEN REALMS® computer roleplaying game. Developed by Bioware and published by Interplay's Black Isle Division, *Baldur's Gate* is the first roleplaying game to use Bioware's Infinity engine. This engine allows the player to explore a game world composed of beautifully rendered maps (a sampling of which you see here), rather than the tile-based locations typically seen in other computer RPGs.

Baldur's Gate lets you create a character from any of six races—human, elf, half-elf, dwarf, gnome, and halfling—and choose from twenty-six different classes such as Fighter, Thief, Cleric, Mage, Druid, and Specialist Wizard. You can play the game solo, gather a party of NPC allies to help you in your quest, or play with up to five of your friends over the Internet.

One of the most fabled locations in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting is Candlekeep, legendary bastion of knowledge and vault of the famed prophecies of Alaundo the Sage.

The Wards of Candlekeep

As mentioned in *Volo's Guide to the Sword Coast*, several powerful wards protect Candlekeep. These wards prevent anything from burning except wicks and wax, prevent the operation of teleportational magics and many destructive spells, kill all molds and insects (such as paper wasps), and prohibit the entry of bookworms. Rumors of more dangerous wards fill the mouths of local gossips, but the sages reveal little about their protective magics. The slow drone and the prickling sensation generated by the wards can help those sensitive to magic orient themselves to Candlekeep. The sensation can be felt, faintly, when the practitioner is several miles away, then grows stronger as the traveler approaches the keep. The presence of the wards makes the use of *detect magic* spells within the citadel difficult (–10% to detecting the nature of an enchantment on an object), but sufficient concentration usually allows the caster to overcome this "background noise."

The Droning of the Wards

One of the sages of Candlekeep, Phlydia (female human, W7, CG) was once taken aback when a visiting mage complained about the "droning" of the wards. She claimed the sound the traveler heard was not the wards at all but actually chanting that emanated from the walls of the keep itself, repeating Alaundo's prophecies.

Firebeard Elvenhair

One of the frequent visitors to Candlekeep is Firebeard Elvenhair, a mage who frequently makes trips along the Sword Coast in search of books for Candlekeep sages. Although he is supposed to keep his searches secret, many dealers in Baldur's Gate and Beregost are aware that he purchases the books for Candlekeep. In exchange for his many years of service, Firebeard is allowed to enter Candlekeep without the standard entrance fee (although he is not permitted to remain within the walls for more than the customary ten-day period).

Candlekeep Inn, First Floor

Firebeard Elvenhair, male human M8: AC 8; MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA spells; SD spells, *brooch of shielding;* SZ M (5'8"); Str 9, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 15; AL NG *WP:* Quaterstaff, Dagger; *NWP:* Ancient History, Etiquette, Heraldry, Languages–Modern (Elvish), Local History, Read/Write (Common and Elvish), Religion, Riding Land-Based, Spellcraft, Weather Sense.

Spells (4/3/3/2) 1st—*armor, comprehend languages*, detect magic*, friends*, identify, magic missile*, mending, spider climb;* 2nd—*continual light, detect evil*, knock*, levitate, scare*, strength;* 3rd—*blink, dispel magic*, item, lightning bolt*, wraithform*;* 4th—*detect scrying, monster summoning II*, polymorph self.**

* Indicates memorized spell

• • •

We came upon the main gate, where one of the watchers, Hull, greeted us in clinking plate mail with a quarterstaff in hand. He gave us a wide grin and a nod.

"I'm impressed you made it through the gale there, Firebeard!" he shouted. "Many would have turned back."

"I could use some place to store my bags and pack the animals," I replied. "And so could—" As I gestured to the others around me, I noticed our numbers had suddenly thinned. "Weren't there two others with me?" I asked. Two of the men I had taken to be manservants of one of the merchants seemed to have vanished. Carbos and Shank, I believe, had been their names.

"Two others?" Hull blinked as he scanned the line. "Not that I saw."

"Perhaps they have already made their way to the inn."

"Well, at some of the rates Winthrop's charging, the bunkhouse might be a better place for 'em to sleep. If you've got gold melting in your pocket, of course, the Inn's a fine place..." He snorted. "Better than the barracks in any event."

Candlekeep Environs

1. Bunkhouse: A sturdy one-story building, the Candlekeep bunkhouse has room for ten. Cots and bedrolls are scattered across the floor of the building. Teamsters, manservants, and slaves (when mages from Thay arrive at Candlekeep to do research) are usually housed here while their masters take rooms in the Candlekeep Inn.

2. Stables: The small stables house several cows and horses under the caring eye of the stable master, Dreppin (0-level male human, hp 4, N). Several of the livestock have been hit hard by the rainy season, and Dreppin is looking to secure healing herbs from travelers to insure that the cattle remain healthy.

3. Barracks: The armed monks that guard Candlekeep live in this dry, sparsely furnished building. The Candlekeep force consists of the Gatewarden, his five underofficers (four Watchers and the Keeper of the Portal), and sixty experienced (F4) monks armed with plate mail and quarterstaves. The higher-ranking officers carry magical rods and rings to help carry out their duties.

4. Granary: Recently Candlekeep's granary has been plagued by rats. Though more grain can be brought easily from the surrounding towns, it has become a great source of irritation to the stewards of the keep and to one of the guards in particular, a dwarf by the name of Reever (male dwarf, F4, CG, chainmail, battle-ax). The irritation is driven home by the multitude of cats lounging about the keep that have little interest in decreasing the rat population. Reever has taken it upon himself to wipe out the rats by any means possible, but most have eluded him so far.

The lack of activity that plagues most of the guards at Candlekeep has hit Reever hard, so much so that he looks for battle wherever he can find it, even if it is against an army of rats. This war has become the source of many jokes told around the fire in the Candlekeep Inn.

5. Infirmary: The duties of the infirmary have been temporarily taken over by a Priest of Oghma who has made a pilgrimage here from Waterdeep. Magical healing and minor potions of *healing* are available at standard rates. Getting treatment at the infirmary is easy, as the Candlekeep inhabitants are few in number and rarely suffer anything more troublesome than a hangover. Two of the keep's greatest offenders, Hull and Fuller (both human males, F4), have frequently been found in the infirmary after their drinking binges and have been punished by the Gatewarden more than once.

6. Temple of Oghma. The priest in charge of the temple of Oghma alternates between tending the shrine and the infirmary. The temple itself is constructed out of a glittering white marble, and a large pool dominates the interior of the temple.

Jonril Narod, male human C5 of Oghma: AC 8; MV 12; hp 35; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5'8"); Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 12; AL NG; *WP:* Staff, Mace, *NWP:* Ancient History, Healing, Herbalism, Local History, Read/Write, Religion.

Spells: (5/5/1) 1st—*bless, cure light wounds, command, detect magic, light;* 2nd—*hold person, know alignment, silence 15' radius, slow poison, spiritual hammer;* 3rd—*cure disease*

7. Shrines to Deneir, Gond, and Milil: These three small shrines lie against the outer wall. Despite the presence of the shrines, there are few members of these religions within the walls of Candlekeep.

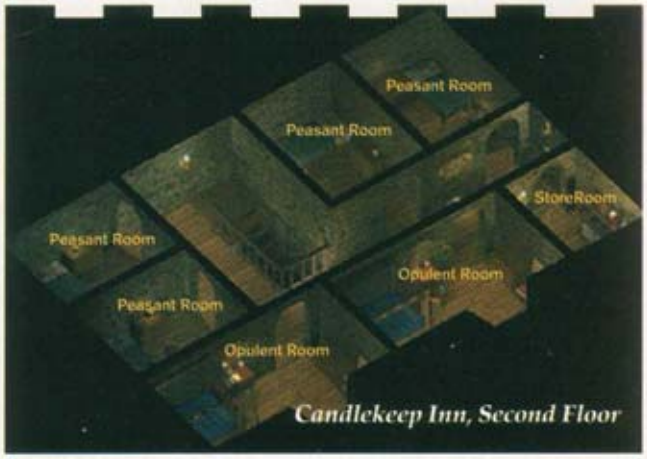
• • •

The Candlekeep Inn was nestled against the exterior wall of the fortress, two stories tall and still overshadowed by the citadel's walls. It was smaller than some of the inns in Beregost, but it was dry and warm. We were not but one foot inside the door when the innkeeper, a large man named Winthrop, was upon us, taking our wet cloaks and welcoming us with a loud, booming voice. He bid us to warm our feet by the fire in the common room. Most of my companions chose one of the vintages Winthrop held in stock, and we proceeded to relax after our long journey.

The hour was late, so I resolved to rest myself for a while before seeking an audience with Gorion in the morn.

8. Candlekeep Inn. The Candlekeep Inn itself is a two-story affair, with a large common room on the first floor and a small, private dining room to the side. The innkeeper, Winthrop, has a small room behind the counter.

Winthrop also has a well-stocked wine cellar, which contains kegs of common mead and Bitter Black Ale along with bottles of Blood Wine, Firewine, and Arabellan Dry Wine. These vintages frequently find their way into the gullets of of the Candlekeep guards, the most notable offenders being Hull and Fuller (see Infirmary, above).



Candlekeep Inn, Second Floor

A source of contention with a few of the monks at Candlekeep, Winthrop also carries a wide range of arms and armor, supplied by merchants from Baldur's Gate and Beregost. The watchers do not pay much mind to merchants bringing weapons into Candlekeep, but the Keeper of the Tomes has exchanged many heated words with Winthrop about his private arsenal.

Winthrop: (0-level human male, 6 hp, NG) A plump, balding man with a thick northern accent and a pleasant (if oftentimes crude) demeanor, Winthrop has a predilection for telling bawdy jokes and a strong dislike of mercenaries. He has been the caretaker of the inn for many years, and the low frequency (and nature) of the traffic through Candlekeep has made him quite placid. The rooms are clean and comfortable, and although they don't match the rest of Candlekeep's grandeur or Winthrop's claim that they're the "best on the Sword Coast," there are few unhappy customers.

• • •

I was awakened the next morning by a sharp tapping at the door. I staggered from my bed and threw open the door to find an awkward-looking young girl there, looking at me with wide eyes. Traveling through the storm the previous day must have worn me out more than I had thought, and I could barely focus upon her or even ascertain why she was at my door. I had met Imoen on previous visits to the keep, and my first coherent thought of the day was, "Where's my purse?"

Imoen's presence is always a mixed blessing. She'll tell you anything you want to know about the keep if you've got money, but she always delivers bad news for free—taking careful note of the recipient's reaction.

Imoen's eyes eyes narrowed as she looked up at me. "Gorion's pacing around the common room. I think he's angry." Her voice was high, but it contained a practiced edge that seemed strange in the mouth of someone so young.

Imoen, female human T1: AC 6; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (1d6); NG; S 9, D 18, C 9, I 15, W 11, Ch 16; OL 40%, MS 35%, FT 10%, PP 25%; *WP:* Short sword, Shortbow; *NWP:* Local History, Read Lips, Cooking, Brewing.

Candlekeep Inn Menu

Drinks

Common Mead	**5 cp/gallon**
Winthrop's Wicked Ale	**2 sp/pint**
Bitter Black Ale	**1 sp/pint**
Blood Wine	**5 cp/glass**
Firewine	**7 cp/glass**
Arabellan Dry Wine	**1 sp/glass**

Food

Spicy Beef Stew	**6 cp**
Candlekeep Potatoes	**8 cp**
Beef Roast	**2 sp**
Bread & Cheese	**2 cp**

Imoen has been a fixture at Candlekeep for as long as Winthrop himself. The two of them traveled together from Baldur's Gate, where Winthrop apparently adopted the girl after her mother died giving birth to her. Since then, Winthrop has taken her under his wing and taken the responsibility of caring for her. Although a pleasant enough fellow, Winthrop is not a strict disciplinarian and has allowed Imoen to run wild in Candlekeep ("wild," at least to the monks of the citadel). She is a valuable source of information on things going on in the keep, as she tends to always be in the right place to overhear conversations and accidentally uncover hidden letters and diaries.

• • •

"Someone told Gorion you'd been here all night without reporting to him," Imoen said. "I think he's angry that you didn't meet with him last night."

I grunted and dressed myself, sure of who that "someone" was, then stepped out. Someone must talk to Winthrop about that girl. As I left, Imoen darted in and began to clean my room, and I went down to meet Gorion. As I had expected, he was pacing impatiently in front of the fireplace.

Gorion's face was stone, and he looked as if he was barely holding back a coughing fit.

"You look beset with weighty matters, Keeper," I said. "Perhaps you should spend more time at rest rather than scouring the Candlekeep stacks." He made no response, which caused my smile to fade instantly.

"There is something wrong," I said.

Gorion's stone face crumbled, and he seemed to age before my eyes. "I fear so," Gorion answered. "I have felt ... things." He looked like he wanted to continue, but he stopped himself.

"What's the matter?" I asked quietly. "It does no good to keep knowledge to oneself, especially here."

His eyes blazed. "Candlekeep has kept many secrets, and it will hold many more." He simmered for a moment, then sighed slightly. "Have you brought the book?"

I nodded and gave him what I had tucked under my arm. "I managed to make the rendezvous in Beregost, but she demanded an additional sum due to the weather con–"

"You will be compensated." He leafed through the book, his eyes scanning each page. "Is it an original?"

"Of course," I indicated the mark on the spine. "May I ask why you need it?"

"I needed confirmation of something. You see, it is my ward," Gorion sighed. "I fear we are both in danger. I fear we might need to leave Candlekeep soon."

Candlekeep and Baldur's Gate

The ward Gorion speaks of is your player character in *Baldur's Gate*. You have been raised by Gorion for most of your childhood, and you know little of the outside world beyond Candlekeep. Acting as your father, Gorion has raised you on a thousand tales of heroes and monsters, lovers and infidels, battles and tragedies. However, one story was always left untold: that of your true heritage. You have been told that you are an orphan, but your past remains largely unknown.

Lately, Gorion has been growing distant, as if some grave matter weighs heavily upon him. His silence has begun worrying many of his friends at Candlekeep. Unknown to many at the citadel, he has begun making secret preparations to leave, but his destination is unknown. Imoen has recently become aware of his plans to depart, but she has not yet told any of the other Candlekeep residents.

• • •

I was skeptical of Gorion's grim words, and I told him so. Candlekeep was well defended, and its many wards could protect its inhabitants. Gorion seemed unconvinced. He left me, retiring to the inner fortress of Candlekeep with the tome I had brought.

Yet when I went to sleep that night, my dreams were filled with images of Candlekeep burning, its walls cast down. Everywhere I looked, lava poured from the crag, casting hellish fires upon the remains of the keep. Of the monks, the acolytes, the sages, there was no sign, as if they all had been swept away.

Impossible, I thought. In the back of my mind, I heard the slow drone of the Candlekeep wards. But the prickling sensation I felt now was born of fear, and it came not from the citadel but from my own mind.

Outside, the rain had resumed, and I could hear the waves crashing upon the coast.

Using Candlekeep in your Game

Its importance to the upcoming computer game aside, Candlekeep makes an excellent starting point for adventures in the FORGOTTEN REALMS. The sages constantly seek new sources of knowledge and need adventurers to retrieve such records from the far corners of Faerûn.

Further Adventure Hooks

- Firebeard Elvenhair has discovered a plot by two Red Wizards of Thay to ambush him on his way back to Candlekeep. He is looking for a discreet group of adventurers to help him thwart the wizards' plans and to ensure he makes it back to the keep.
- A mid-level wizard in Beregost needs information from the sages of Candlekeep but does not have the time to make the journey herself. She needs a group of adventurers to go to Candlekeep, negotiate with the sages, and return with the completed research.
- The dragon Miirym haunts the caverns beneath Candlekeep, but she is confined to a fairly small area. (See "Wyrms of the North" in *DRAGON® Magazine* #247.) The sages are hiring adventurers to explore the labyrinth and seal any means of entry that Miirym cannot reach and thus protect. Everyone is given clear warnings that they intrude upon Miirym's territory at their own peril.

Chris Avellone, if that is his real name, claims he went to college at William and Mary, got a degree in English, then realized he had no idea what he was going to do with it. He is currently working on PLANESCAPE® Torment *and* Fallout 2.

Each bi-monthly issue features Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® game scenarios perfect for your campaign. Even if you design your *own* fantasy setting—DUNGEON® Adventures has something for you.

Fill out the order form today!

There's no better bargain for roleplaying adventures—save 25% or more by subscribing now.

Fill out this form and mail it, with your payment, to the address below. *(Send U.S. funds only)*

Name_____
Address _____
City_____ State/Prov._____
Country_____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Method of Payment:

☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA

Credit Card Number_____
MC Bank No._____ Expiration Date_____
Signature_____ Date_____

Mail this card with payment to:
DUNGEON Adventures
TSR, Inc.
P.O. Box 469107
Escondido, CA 92046-9107
or Fax to: 619-738-4805

Dungeon® ADVENTURES

Subscribers in the U.S. and Canada will receive their first issues within 8 to 10 weeks.
All prices are subject to change without notice.

Saves DMs time and money.

Subscription Type:

☐ New ☐ Renewal (enclose mailing label)

To U.S. addresseses

☐ 1 year (6 issues) for $19.95
☐ 2 years (12 issues) for $35.95
☐ 3 years (18 issues) for $49.95

To Canadian addresses

☐ 1 year (6 issues) for $24.95
☐ 2 years (12 issues) for $44.95
☐ 3 years (18 issues) for $64.95

DMDA98

POWERS G

MARVEL SUPER HEROES ADVENTURE GAME

Psionics in the MARVE

Whether it's the matchless mind of Professor Charles Xavier or the tremendous Telepathy and Telekinesis of Nate Grey, fantastic mental powers or "psionics" are a staple of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Universe. Psionic heroes and villains offer unique opportunities and challenges to players and Narrators.

Psi Powers

Psionics ("psi" for short) are extraordinary powers of the mind, like Telepathy and Telekinesis, the two classic psi powers. Generally speaking, psi powers have Willpower as their trump suit, and psionic heroes rely on strong Willpower to help them in mental combat. Some psi powers use Intellect as their trump suit, particularly those that affect the physical world, like Telekinesis.

A psionic hero should have a strong Willpower and a selection of mental powers. The hero might have only a single mental power (like Justice's Telekinesis), several powers (like Phoenix's Telepathy/Telekinesis combo), or many powers (like Nate Grey's collection of psi abilities). The Mental Control skill is valuable for psionic heroes, since it lowers the difficulty of all powers based on Willpower (not just Mind Control). Don't overlook the value of a Psi-Screen for protecting a psionic hero from mental attacks and powers; most heroes with these abilities have some kind of mental defense to protect themselves from other psionics.

Psi powers, particularly Telepathy, are versatile and can be employed for many different stunts by the heroes and villains who possess them. In addition to the ones described in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Game Book, here are some applications and stunts for psionic heroes.

Astral Projection

Astral projectors can use Willpower-based powers while in astral form, allowing them to use powers like Telepathy and Mind Control on other people while out of body. This is a powerful ability, since an astral projector cannot be affected or even detected by anyone without the appropriate mental powers. Narrators should beware of heroes who try to go into action solely in astral form, making them immune to counterattack.

Heroes and villains capable of Astral Projection may fight battles entirely on the astral plane (like Professor X against the Shadow King, or Dr. Strange and many of his opponents). In astral form, physical abilities like Strength and Agility are irrelevant. Willpower serves the same function as Strength and Intellect the same function as Agility on the astral plane. Physical powers have no effect; only Willpower-based powers work. Two opponents with Astral Projection can fight a battle without anyone in the physical world even noticing.

Illusion

As mentioned in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Game Book, Illusion can be a potent power when its true nature is concealed from others. A skilled illusionist can appear to have any number of powers, even Reality Warping, if the subjects of the illusion don't know it's an illusion. Moonglow (from the Squadron Supreme) concealed the true nature of her Illusion powers and pretended to have powers of Flight, Phasing, Light, and Gravity Control using an illusory image of herself. The super villain Mastermind was an expert at using illusions to confuse his opponents and turn them against each other by twisting reality, such as when he turned Phoenix against the X-Men or the X-Men against Cyclops by convincing them Cyclops was actually Dark Phoenix reborn. A skilled illusionist often mixes illusion and reality, using an illusion to conceal a real danger like a trap or an enemy.

Mind Control

If an illusionist can make you doubt your senses, a mind controller can make you doubt your own thoughts and memories. Can you ever really be sure you did something of your own will, or was there some outside influence? A

THE MIND

SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game

by Stephen Kenson

subtle opponent with Mind Control can plant thoughts, alter memories, and arrange things so it's almost impossible to be sure.

Generally speaking, only villains use powers like Emotion Control, Hypnosis, and Mind Control casually. Psionic heroes carry a special burden to use their powers wisely. They are reluctant to usurp control of another person's mind against his or her will. A hero who does so on a regular basis may need to consider a change of Calling. Even powerful psionics like Professor X and Phoenix are loathe to interfere with the minds of others casually, and there are often consequences for such actions. When Professor X used his powers to shut down Magneto's mind, a portion of Magneto's consciousness was trapped in Xavier's own. It loosed the professor's dark side and created the entity known as Onslaught, which nearly killed many of the world's greatest heroes.

Of course, villains have no compunctions about using their powers to control the minds of others, and super villains like Mesmero and the Shadow King treat other people as little more than puppets.

Brainwashing: A mind controller can attempt to brainwash someone rather than control the subject short-term. This stunt requires a *daunting Mind Control (Willpower)* action. If it succeeds, the controller can implant certain commands that the subject must carry out at a later time. A hero can make a *daunting Willpower (Mind Control)* action to resist the effects of brainwashing.

Memory Alteration: Similar to Mindwipe, except the hero alters the subject's memories instead of erasing them by making a *daunting Mind Control (Willpower)* action. The subject can be made to recall things differently from how they actually happened. The subject believes the memories are real and acts accordingly until the effects are reversed using this power.

Telekinesis

In addition to using Telekinesis simply to lift and move things, a hero can use it to manipulate objects at a distance: pushing buttons, moving levers, pulling (or jamming) the triggers of weapons, or even pulling the pin from a grenade. A hero can telekinetically wield either actual weapons (like swords or knives) or anything he can mentally lift.

Telekinetics can grab objects (like weapons) out of an opponent's grasp with an *average Telekinesis (Strength)* action. The narrator should feel free to adjust this difficulty if the object is large and heavy or if the person holding the object is unusually strong. Telekinetics are also fond of grabbing opponents and lifting them off the ground. This is an *easy Telekinesis (Strength)* action, requiring an *easy Strength (Telekinesis)* action for the target to break out.

A telekinetic can manipulate machines with moving parts, releasing the brakes on a car, hitting keys on a computer keyboard, and so forth. The difficulty of the action depends on the complexity of the machine.

Clothing Change: A telekinetic hero wearing clothing made of unstable molecules can change the color, style, or fit of the clothing with a *challenging Telekinesis* action. This does not alter the clothing's protective value, only its appearance. Telekinetic heroes may use this stunt to quickly change into their costumes.

Internal Attack: The hero can telekinetically attack a target internally, squeezing the trachea, a blood vessel, or something similar. The attack requires a *daunting Telekinesis (Strength)* action and ignores the target's defense, doing Intensity damage directly. A telekinetic might also use this stunt to damage machines by affecting their internal parts.

Manipulation: The hero can perform fine manipulation with his or her telekinesis. This stunt is useful for doing things like typing, operating controls, or even picking locks.

Reflection: The hero can catch and deflect physical weapons (even bullets) back at an attacker with an *average Telekinesis* action.

Telepathy

Telepathy is perhaps the most versatile psionic power. A telepath is an invaluable teammate, able to keep everyone in contact using the Team Link stunt, which allows for instant and silent communication. A telepath can link the minds of others to share knowledge quickly and allow someone with Teleportation to see through another person's eyes to teleport safely to an unseen location.

Telepathic heroes can use their power for several stunts other than those listed in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Game Book, including the following:

Gestalt: The hero can function as the coordinator for a telepathic gestalt, the mental combination of multiple psionic individuals. This works just like the Gestalt power from the Game Book. The mental gestalt's combined Telepathy power intensity equals that of the most powerful character in the gestalt, plus that of the coordinator (or the next highest character, if the coordinator is the most powerful). A telepathic gestalt often has tremendous mental power.

Mind Meld: The combination of the telepath's mind with another mind. This is a total sharing of information and a considerable intimacy, so it is not entered into lightly. It requires a *daunting Telepathy (Willpower)* action. The telepath and the subject know everything the other knows and find it impossible to lie to each other while melded.

Mindscape: The telepath can enter the "world" inside another person's mind and interact with the things and people there. This is most commonly used as a means of mental combat, similar to Astral Projection. It can also be used to "go inside" the minds of unconscious or comatose persons in an attempt to revive them, or to enter the dreams of sleeping persons and interact with them. You can have an entire game based around a trip into someone's mindscape, like the time Professor X and the New Mutants traveled into the shattered mindscape of the Professor's son, David.

Personal Rapport: This is a permanent telepathic link between the hero and another person. It requires a *daunting Telepathy* action to establish and the other party must be willing. From then on, each individual can always sense what the other is feeling and knows immediately if the other person is in danger or hurt.

Mental Problems

Of course, being psionic isn't all cool powers and stunts. Psionics, especially telepaths, have some drawbacks. These are not Hindrances exactly but rather unique problems encountered by psis. Psionic heroes can also have Hindrances based around the unique nature of their powers.

Feedback: A psionic hero whose power is resisted or fought against might suffer some kind of feedback, like a telepath attempting to control someone's mind while the subject fights back, or a telekinetic whose mental grip is broken by an opponent. The hero suffers damage points equal to the Willpower, Strength, or other Ability of the target, reduced by the hero's own Willpower.

Overload: A telepath's senses can be overloaded by the presence of too many minds or by powerful emotions or thoughts if the telepath is unprepared. This can also happen if the telepath scans a more powerful subject than expected (like a cosmically powerful alien mind) or tries to probe one person just as a New York subway lets dozens of people out onto the platform. This causes damage equal to the subject's Willpower or an intensity chosen by the Narrator against the telepath's Willpower. A Psi-Screen helps protect against this damage, and many telepaths develop Psi-Screens simply to screen out mental "noise."

Prejudice: Psionics are often mistrusted because of the nature of their powers. A psionic who uses his powers responsibly won't have a lot of problems, but a psionic who doesn't is mistrusted and hounded by the public and the authorities.

Narrating Psionics

Narrating adventures for heroes with psionic powers like Telepathy, Precognition, and ESP can be difficult. With one successful action, the hero can know everything about your carefully prepared plot and jump right to the end, spoiling the fun for the other players. It's your job as Narrator to make sure that doesn't happen, without frustrating the player with the psionic hero all the time.

The first thing to keep in mind is that psionic powers don't make a hero omniscient. Even if a hero can read minds, that doesn't mean the narrator must give things away. Telepathic heroes should be wary about invading other people's privacy casually, and some people may refuse to have their minds read even if they're innocent. A strong Willpower can sometimes make it too difficult for a telepath to read someone's mind.

Powerful emotions triggered by certain situations (especially violent crimes) might cause a psionic to suffer from overload (above) if he or she tries to scan the crime scene or someone involved in it. These feelings may also conceal or obscure any information associated with the crime.

Psionic information is also highly subjective. There's no guarantee that the future seen by a precognitive hero is the only future, merely a possible one. The information gained with Telepathy is only as reliable as the subject's thoughts and memories. What if the hero doesn't remember something correctly, or what if the hero's memory has already been tampered with by another telepath?

A rival psionic can use his or her powers to hide things from the hero; use the rival's power intensity as additional opposition to the hero's actions. You don't necessarily have to tell the hero why the attempt failed unless the hero specifically checks for opposing psionic interference.

Psionic Equipment

The scientists of the Marvel Universe have developed gadgets and equipment that affect many psionic powers. Some of these devices are used by the authorities, while others are used by villains or secret government organizations (like "Project: Wideawake").

Psionic Detector: A device (usually hand-held) that picks up psions (energy particles that psionic powers use). It provides Psychic Detection 8 (higher for more sensitive detectors).

Psi Amplifier: This is a device like Cerebro or the PAM (Psionic Amplification Machine) used by the ESPer division of S.H.I.E.L.D. It provides Ability Boost for all Willpower-based powers while a user is hooked into it. A psi amplifier can (at the Narrator's discretion) make certain mental powers suffer from the limits Masochistic, Uncontrolled, or Unpredictable while they are amplified.

Psi Nullifier: This device blocks the use of all Willpower and Intellect powers with an intensity less than the Nullification power of the device. A psi nullifier is a collar or headband the subject wears or a device that projects a ray or field that affects the subject for an aura duration (or as long as he or she remains in the field).

Psi Screamer: This terrorist weapon intended specifically to harm telepaths is a kind of telepathic "grenade." It creates a powerful (intensity 15+) mental shock, affecting any telepath within firing distance. A Psi-Screen helps protect against the damage of a screamer. Physical defenses have no effect.

Psionic Adventure Hooks

Here are some adventure ideas involving psionic powers for your game.

★ A telepathic hero or character catches a stray thought from someone planning to commit a serious crime. The trouble is, the thought came from someone in a large crowd and the hero can't be sure who it was. What if someone in the crowd is not what he or she appears to be?

★ A hero "hears" a telepathic cry for help. It comes from a boy who is a telepathic mutant whose powers surfaced early. He ran away from home and is afraid of being attacked by mutant-haters. Unfortunately, the boy has no training in controlling his power, so he can't shut out the "noise" of other people's thoughts. He also randomly broadcasts his own fear onto other people, causing a rash of random "panic attacks" throughout the city. The heroes have to find him before a group of disguised mutant-hunting Sentinels do.

★ A friend or ally of the heroes is left in a coma by an illness or the attack of a villain. The heroes (perhaps with the help of a telepathic character like Professor X) must travel into the mindscape of their friend to help bring him or her back to consciousness.

★ A villain is kidnapping psionics to hook them up to a powerful psi-amplifier designed to channel all their power into the villain, giving him or her tremendous psionic power. Perhaps the villain is building a mind-control machine, powered by telepaths, to take over the world.

★ A telepathic or astral projecting villain is committing crimes by possessing other people, then releasing them once the crime is done. The victims have no memory of what happened and no alibi to prove their innocence. When the villain uses one or more of the heroes as pawns, they have to figure out a way to prove their innocence. How do they find and capture a villain who's never been seen and can change bodies at will?

Steve Kenson is a regular freelance contributor to SAGA® System games, including the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game. Despite his best efforts, he has yet to develop any significant psionic powers.

Expand your A

Rising Tide
Mel Odom
The Threat from the Sea: Book I
TSR# 21312
ISBN# 0-7869-1312-6
AVAILABLE JANUARY

In the first book of the sweeping new series, *The Threat from the Sea*, an evil warlord rallies undersea races in a surprise attack on the Sword Coast. As the plot unfolds, you'll discover important clues that reveal secrets of the adventure game product.

The Cleric Quintet
R. A. Salvatore
TSR# 21313
ISBN# 0-7869-1313-4
AVAILABLE JANUARY

You can follow the scholar-priest Cadderly through all five of R. A. Salvatore's compelling books in a single volume. This is the ultimate collector's edition, from the heart of the **Forgotten Realms**® adventure setting.

The Star of Cursrah
Clayton Emery
Lost Empires
TSR# 21322
ISBN# 0-7869-1322-3
AVAILABLE JANUARY

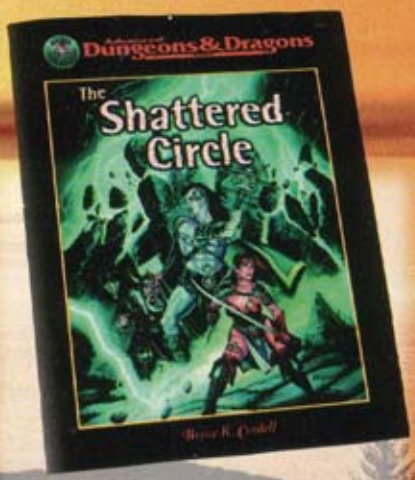
A group of adventurers stumbles across a buried city guarded by a powerful undead force. This gripping action story is linked to the *Empires of the Shining Sea* campaign setting.

The Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® realm is always expanding. These novels and supplements will transport you to the event horizon where nothing is certain, and anything is possible.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

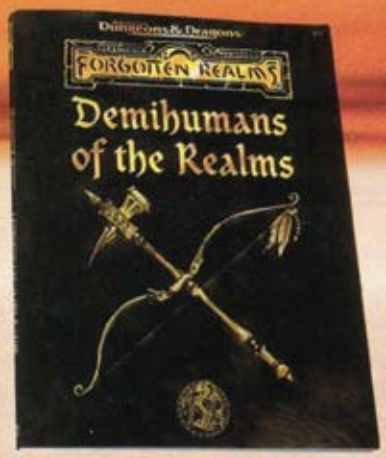
AD&D, Forgotten Realms, TSR, and related logos are registered trademarks of TSR, Inc. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©1999 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

D&D® horizons



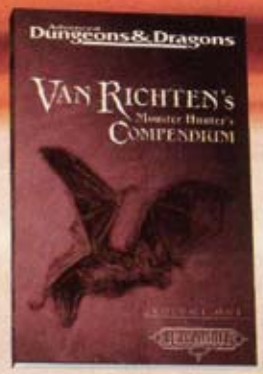
Shattered Circle
Bruce Cordell
TSR# 11325
ISBN# 0-7869-1325-8
AVAILABLE JANUARY

A strange force has destroyed part of an ancient circle of standing stones, breaking its primal wards. Can your heroes solve the mystery of its destruction before it's too late? Find out with this exciting adventure for 1–3 level characters.



Demihumans of the Realms
Roger E. Moore
TSR# 11316
ISBN# 0-7869-1316-9
AVAILABLE JANUARY

This engaging volume features more than 36 player-character kits for the demihuman races: elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. Create distinctive demihuman characters, local culture, historical influences, unique class abilities, proficiencies, and much more. Breathe life into every character in your campaign!



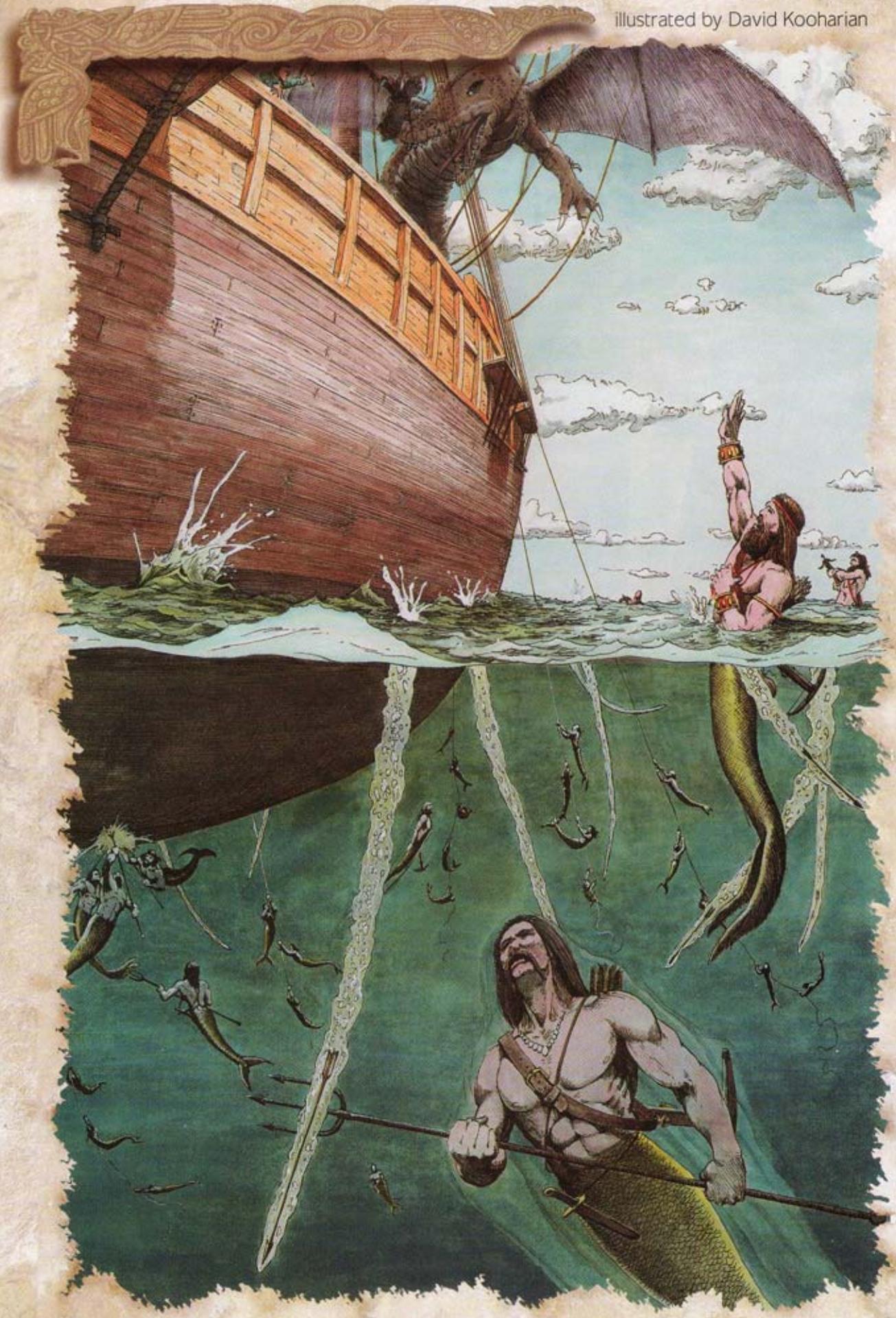
Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium
TSR Staff
Volume One
TSR# 11447
ISBN# 0-7869-1447-5
AVAILABLE FEBRUARY

Collected for the first time, Dr. Rudolph van Richten's guides to the most terrifying creatures of the night—vampires, werebeasts, and golems! Add an element of horror to any fantasy adventure with the secrets and details revealed herein.

Take part in the journey. AD&D.

Visit our website at <www.tsr.com>
Questions? Call (800) 324-6496

illustrated by David Kooharian



Fiction by
Mel Odom

Dark Legacy

22 Chess 1355, Year of the Harp

"Wake, husband. Someone's in our home."

Narros struggled from slumber, thinking for a moment that the repetitious nightmare that had been throttling his rest for nights still gripped him. He blinked his eyes open, feeling the warmth of his mate next to him, sensing the disturbance in the ocean currents. "Who?"

Klyss shook her head. Her chestnut hair swirled around her bare shoulders. Fear widened her luminescent eyes. Her fluked tail curled apprehensively, coiling over Narros's.

Shifting on the pile of moss and seaweed they'd gathered for their bed, Narros offered up a quick prayer to Eadro, the Deliverer, Lord of the Sunlit Shadows. He seized his trident from beside the bed and swept out with his free hand. The webbing between his fingers caught the water and lifted him from the moss, then he flipped his tail and swam toward the doorway. He let the trident guide him, the tines bright and sharp. He felt Klyss gliding along behind him, her presence marked by the interruption of the current around him.

Laakos' Reef, named for the merman who'd discovered it in the Shining Sea forty miles east of Calimport, housed the merfolk community. Most days ships crossed the ocean's surface above, but they had little if any contact with them. The merfolk treasured their privacy and had no interest in the surface dwellers who lived around them.

The reef served to keep away most of the sailors, but occasionally a few of the curious ventured into the depths, searching for the gold and treasure rumors held that they possessed.

Narros felt the strange disturbance of the slow currents filling his dwelling again, trying to imagine where it could be. They'd lived there for years, and he knew the seasons and the time of day by the currents that ran through his home. His senses expanded in the quiet of the night until it seemed the sea was almost a part of him. That sensation faded, though, when there was much activity in the water around him.

He was six feet long, from the top of his head to his fluked fins. A seashell braid around his forehead held his dark brown hair back from his eyes, and a thick curling beard reached his chest. He was broad and thick, slabs of muscle draping his frame from more than eighty years of fighting time and tide. Old scars from sharp fins and shellfish covered his hands, and the scales covering the lower half of his body glistened silvery-gray.

"The children." Klyss's words leaked quietly into his ear, the way they did when merfolk wanted their words to travel only a short distance.

"No," he replied, keeping his own response soft as the brush of a questor fish's feeler. Zonn and Mihter weren't children anymore, but his mate was reluctant to accept that. Both boys were grown men in the eyes of the merfolk community.

Dark Legacy

His sons' rooms occupied space above theirs, carved from the reef with Narros's own hands, enlarged as they'd grown bigger. The currents indicated that the movement was coming from the lower quarters of the home.

"You should call for help," Klyss said. She gripped his arm in one hand, her nails biting into his flesh.

"No." Narros took a firmer grip on his trident. "This is our home, Klyss. I'll not allow it to be invaded. The movement is coming from the temple. I'll not allow that either."

She looked at him, and for a moment he thought she might argue further. He didn't want that because he wasn't going to stay there any longer and didn't want to offend her.

Klyss was slim, full-breasted, and full-hipped, and she wore nothing save a beaten gold bracelet he'd given her when they'd been betrothed and necklaces of shells and coral she'd strung herself.

Reluctantly, she released his arm and kissed his cheek. "Be careful."

He smiled at her with more confidence than he felt, then slipped through the door. His tail flipped, driving him across the main living chamber of the home. It was thirty feet square, overly large by most merfolk standards, but he was the community's senior priest and often entertained large groups.

The temple was west of his home, connected by a short hallway. Round windows cut into the reef let in the pale moonlight that penetrated from the surface world. Narros's natural eyesight gave him a broader spectrum of vision than a surface dweller enjoyed, and he saw the inside of the chamber clearly. When the full sun beat down on the ocean's surface, the colors came through better. At this time of night, objects and the surroundings were almost colorless, rendered in blacks and whites mottled by grays.

The stone walls were smooth, worn down by adz and chisel. He'd invested a large part of his life in fashioning their home. Pictures, crafted by Klyss from shells, made from polished stone, coral, and sand, showed portraits of family and favorite places they visited. Her masterpiece was the representation of their two sons as children. It captured the round faces of Zonn and Mihter, the older boy's hand reaching out toward a bright blue and green angelfish. Klyss had labored for years to get the piece exactly right, using only variegated shells with the proper colors. With only half their life spent with the colors brought by the day, mermen had an appreciation for those done brightly and well.

Narros swam into the narrow hallway connecting the home to the temple. Cold fear touched his heart when he considered what the invaders might be seeking. He finned harder, holding the trident in both hands, hoping he wouldn't need to spill blood to protect that which the temple had been given to guard. The object already held the promise of death, foretold for generations.

Better light than what lit his home filled the temple. Vents cut into the roof opened more of the interior to the available illumination. His gaze raked the pulpit and the image of Eadro rendered in bas-relief on the opposite wall. It stood twenty feet tall, making the Lord of the Sunlit Shadows appear gargantuan. Merfolk swam in the nether distance behind him, and clamshells adorned the background. Channels along the walls held living lichens that glowed a faint blue that was one of the only colors available at this time of night and helped banish the shadows. Other plants gave off odors that guaranteed fish wouldn't invade the building.

He spotted three figures working at the bottom of the bas-relief of Eadro, prying away the stonework that held the item delivered unto the temple's safe-keeping all those thousands of years ago. They were mermen, and he knew they were part of the community for which he took responsibility.

"No!" he roared.

They turned as one, staring at him with a mixture of fear and hate. One of them held a surface dweller's crowbar, the fragile iron already showing traces of orange rust that showed dark purple against the blue glow of the lichens. The invaders were all young. Too young, he realized, to decide to do what they were on their own. One of them reached for the sharkbone crossbow sheathed over his shoulder.

Narros swam forward, wrath and resentment burning away the cold fear he'd felt. Then he sensed the current push at him from behind, not a natural occurrence but a force created by someone or something moving through the water. He flailed, trying to turn.

The face of a youth rushed out of the shadows at Narros. The merman priest hesitated, holding back the instinctive response that would have brought the trident in his hands whipping up.

He recognized the coral-chipped trident in the young merman's hands, then felt the smooth butt slam into the side of his jaw. The world around him turned an even deeper indigo, and he was drunk down into it.

• • •

Narros woke again with a headache, a swollen jaw, and the dregs of the bitter nightmare leeching through the back of his mind. He felt the rough surface of the stone floor against his back and knew that he hadn't been unconscious for long.

Klyss stared down at him, her eyes filled with worry. Zonn and Mihter stood behind her, tridents in their hands. In build, both his sons favored their father, but they had their coloring from their mother. Zonn, the elder, wore his hair back in an ornamental braid, while Mihter kept his hacked off to only an inch or so in length as many of the young warriors had come to wear their hair. They'd just come into their beard years, and both only had a light coloring of down on their lower faces.

"Is it gone?" Narros asked, his voice catching in the back of his throat.

"Yes," Klyss answered. "Was it the Taker?"

"No," Narros replied, fanning his hands out and propelling himself upward. Mention of the Taker sent a fresh wave of fear rolling through him. Not the Taker, thank Eadro. When he came, the Taker would leave destruction in his wake.

Narros flicked his tail, reaching his full height. His head pounded for the effort. Short strings of congealed blood twisted around his face, roping up from his injured jaw in the water. "You didn't see them?"

Klyss shook her head. "When you left, I went to our sons and woke them."

"We came quickly," Zonn said. Of the two, he'd always taken his responsibilities more seriously.

"You knew those who did this?" Mihter asked, his face darkening with anger. His temper remained a constant struggle for him.

"Yes." Narros touched his jaw, finding the lump there sensitive even to his light touch. He didn't think it was broken, but it might have been cracked. As a priest of Eadro, he could invoke a healing spell and rid himself of the wound and the pain. He waited, though, knowing that blessings from his god might be needed for more serious wounds that night.

The object the thieves had taken couldn't remain lost. Too much was at stake.

He glanced around the temple, gladdened that nothing else seemed disturbed. The role of priest hadn't been something he'd claimed; rather, it had reached for him, drawing him to the office in spite of his father's wishes for him to be a member of the standing militia that guarded the city. He'd founded the temple here and taken on the sacred trust of guarding the object that had just been taken.

"Who was it?" Mihter demanded. "They won't get away with attacking you, Father. Even should they make the mistake of disrespecting your office, they will respect the blood of my blood."

"In time, and only as I say." Narros finned toward the bas-relief of Eadro. He reached down for the rectangle of stone that had covered the hiding place. Enough light came from the lichens that he saw the empty cavity clearly.

The nightmare oozed through his mind like an eel through delta mud. Kallos, the priest who'd trained him in the way of the Lord of the Sunlit Shadows, had chosen him to protect the object, instilling in him the fear of what might happen should it be removed from his care. Their only protection remained in keeping the object hidden from sight.

Now it was gone.

"Father," Zonn spoke softly. "What do we do?"

Narros banished the anger that warred with the fear in his mind. The fear was more real, more lasting. His own anger he could control, and even Mihter's, but not the consequences of losing the object.

"Call for Harric," Narros ordered. "Have him meet us in the general assembly."

♦ ♦ ♦

Narros waited in the general assembly hall. Crafted by a small army of artisans, the hall resembled the spiral shell of a sea urchin. Fire coral formed this part of the reef, streaking the surface with purplish-reds and vibrant pinks. The work revealed the striations of the shells of the polyps that had gathered there and left their homes behind. Narros knew the appearance from his visits, but for now, in the dimness of the night, those colors were stripped from it, making it a huge, dark cavern.

Over seventy feet across and nearly that in height, the general assembly hall gave the males of the mermen a place to gather and decide the future of their city. Ledges cut into the sides of the elliptical structure allowed them to sit and partake of any decisions. Four gateways cut into the walls near the top mirrored the points of the compass.

Harric was first to arrive, as Narros expected. The merman chieftain was almost seven feet long. He was lean, filled out with ropy muscle that made him a study in angles. His head was triangular, broad across the eyes and dropping down to a narrow, pointed chin. He shaved out of personal preference but maintained a mustache the same copper color as his hair. He carried a sharkbone trident and had a crossbow slung over his back.

Zonn accompanied him.

Drifting down from the gateway, Harric flipped his tail and brought himself on a level with Narros. A troubled look covered his face.

"Zonn has told you?" Narros asked quietly. His voice carried through the general assembly hall.

"Yes." Harric's keen eyes took in the swelling on Narros's jaw. "He also told me you know who did this."

Narros nodded. "I saw them clearly."

"Where is Mihter?"

"Home. With his mother." Narros's younger son hadn't appreciated the assignment, but Narros had been insistent. Should anyone return to the home, Narros knew Mihter wouldn't hesitate to deal with them.

"Have you told him who did this?"

"No."

Harric's mood lightened. "Then tell me."

"Vessid," Narros replied. "He's the one who hit me. He had three friends with him. I know their names as well."

"You're sure?"

"I swear on Eadro's eyes."

Harric grimaced, his mouth tightening to a thin line. "This is going to mean trouble."

"It already has," Narros told him. "Every minute that the Taker's Circlet is loose in the outer world is an increased risk that the wrath of the Taker will be awakened. There can be no trouble worse than that."

♦ ♦ ♦

Dark Legacy

Harric's power as chief of the community was evident in having Revek inside the general assembly in less than fifteen minutes. Narros had the feeling the older man had been sitting in his home, quietly waiting to hear what had happened.

Revek was one of the most successful fish farmers in the community. He was also one of the few who traded with the surface dwellers in Calimport on a frequent basis despite the attempts by some to capture mermen for arcane experimentation and base desires. Revek hired young mermen out to salvage ships lost at sea and to bring undersea delicacies to the surface. Silver streaked his hair and beard, and his face appeared florid. He wore a loose yellow robe, showing his affinities for the surface world.

Although he'd never been invited to Revek's home, Narros had heard the building housed a collection of furniture and accessories gleaned from the surface world. Revek had claimed the tallest spires in the reef, then shaped them into a collection of turrets that spoke of his wealth and his own perception of it.

Four armed mermen flanked Revek, part of the retinue he was never without these days.

To his credit, Harric ignored them, riveting his attention on Revek.

The fat merman drifted down to a level even with Narros, his own attention focusing on the shaman. His eyes glittered. "When Harric first insisted that I be roused at so late an hour," he stated unctuously, "I was irritated. My privacy remains my own, and I treasure it. Then, when I found out Harric came at your urging, I became totally enraged. By what right do you dare send for me like this?"

The force of his words, fired by his anger, broke across Narros's face in a series of small waves. "You spied on the temple, Revek, pried into highly guarded secrets that were entrusted to the shamans by Eadro himself."

Revek's face grew florid. "Your beliefs endangered this community. You were doing nothing about it."

"You violated the sacraments of the temple."

"I'd heard rumors, details handed down from those who worked around the earlier shamans. I wasn't going to sit by while we were all in danger. I'm not so fatalistic as you."

"I do as I'm bade by our god."

"And I seek to save us all, despite your willingness to let us all be at risk. Your behavior will be reviewed, and a satisfaction will be demanded."

"Yes," Narros replied in a hard voice, "there will be. And an accounting as well."

"You presume to threaten me?" Although still obviously angry, Revek appeared amused.

"I give you my promise," Narros stated. "You sent Vessid to the temple—"

Revek glanced over at Harric. "You're going to let him malign my son? Accuse him of things he never did?"

Harric returned the man's gaze full measure. "Narros has identified your son. There will be an inquiry. I will have the truth."

"Faugh!" Revek threw his hands up, flaring the webbing out between his fingers as he seized the currents. "I don't know why I bothered to come here."

"Because you knew you risked your son tonight," Narros said in the thunderous voice that he used to draw in listeners at the temple. "And you wanted to see to what extent that risk would be to yourself as well."

Revek halted, floating three feet above Narros so the shaman had to look up at him. "Don't threaten my son, or I'll see you dead and buried."

"The threat isn't mine," Narros replied. "You sent Vessid there, to the temple of Eadro, and you expect that our god won't claim a vengeance of his own?"

Some of the fire in Revek's eyes died away. "The circlet wasn't a talisman of Eadro's. In truth, that circlet represented the dark evil that Eadro stands against. And the dark evil that his shamans are supposed to stand against."

Narros spoke clearly. "Our faith was given that circlet to protect from the Taker. The mermen shamans knew of it."

"And you jealously guarded that knowledge," Revek accused. "No one in this village outside of myself even knows of its existence."

"That's how it's supposed to be," Narros said. "The Taker's Circlet is a threat that becomes even greater when more people know of it. His legend lives on, but as long as his objects remain hidden, no one will look for him. And when he does return, he won't easily be able to take those objects back to increase his own power. You've jeopardized that."

"The Taker is a false myth," Revek argued, "tangled in with the true religion of our people."

"You blaspheme, Revek!" Narros raised a hand, holding Zonn back with the gesture. He knew his son would defend his father as well as Eadro. A current broke over the shaman's back, letting him know his eldest son had already gone into motion.

Behind and around Revek, the four armed mermen had moved into defensive positions.

Only Harric hadn't moved at all, floating there with his arms folded across his chest.

"I speak the truth," Revek replied. "Anyone who's studied the words and teachings of Eadro knows the locathah have bastardized our god as well, insisting that He has been appropriated by us."

Narros knew that was true. The locathah's religion borrowed heavily from the mermen's own beliefs.

"Do they too have an item that's supposed to be kept from the Taker?" Revek demanded.

"I don't know."

"That circlet is evil," the fat man said. "You can feel the darkness surrounding it. We'll be better off with it gone. By your own teachings, you've been told that the circlet can't be

destroyed and can't be hidden from the Taker. By your own admission, you're merely forestalling the inevitable. Should he truly awake from the slumber he's in, that circlet will draw him to us."

"As the prophecies say will happen," Narros said. His own convictions had wavered over the years, and he'd thought of taking the circlet far from the reef and dropping it into one of the cracks and crevices that erupted from the ocean floor. The fear of the circlet's discovery by the surface world, which was filled with curious humans all seeking new magical spells to add to their own learning, had kept him from doing so. Even then, his obedience to his god was stronger than his fear. Eadro had commanded that the circlet be kept hidden, and the threat of the prying surface dwellers remained too prevalent to ignore.

"That's not acceptable, damn it!" Revek snapped. "Those teachings say our people, our village, will be destroyed when the Taker comes to reclaim that circlet. Even if we tried to stand against the Taker, those prophecies say those forces will be swept away as if they were nothing."

Narros knew it was true. "That's our part in the skeins of fate that are open to us, Revek. But we're taught our people will survive when the Taker is destroyed." It was the shaman's own belief that those two things, the destruction and the continued existence of his people, that kept him strong enough to hold the most fearful thing he'd ever beheld within the temple that he cared for.

The story of the Taker wove itself through all the religions of the seas of Toril, Narros knew. In some he was called the Trickster, but all of them referred to him as the waiting evil. Once, maybe, he'd been someone special to Umberlee, the Bitch Queen of the sea. Currying her favor, the Taker had risen to power in the seas. Then he'd crossed Umberlee, and she'd wreaked her vengeance. She'd made him too powerful to destroy then, but she'd locked him in slumber somewhere in the depths, waiting for the day he would rise again.

"What if the Taker isn't destroyed?" Revek asked.

"He will be," Narros stated. He had only his belief to tell him that, though. All the studies he'd done gave indications but no promises. Eadro had given his forebears the responsibility that had been passed onto him, and he'd said the evil would rise and fall.

"Even so," Revek said, "those prophecies say he'll attack our village, kill most of our people."

Narros knew that was true, and he recalled the fear-filled outrage he'd felt when he'd first been told. His own reaction had closely mirrored Revek's. The prophecies that he had in his possession revealed that much of Toril's seas would be reshaped by the Taker's second coming. In the end, he'd been convinced that the losses had to be accepted that the evil might truly be laid to rest for all times. "That's the price Eadro demands."

"Why?"

"I don't try to understand why Eadro commands certain behavior," Narros replied. "I merely teach the edicts He has given us. I kept the circlet in the temple to follow the orders I've been given, in the hopes that it might never be found."

"What do we gain by keeping it hidden from him? Besides a chance to be destroyed?"

Narros waited, then answered in the silence that followed Revek's questions. "Time," he said softly. "We gain time so that events might line up, that the means of the Taker's destruction will be brought into the world. Allowing that circlet to get back out into the open might awaken the Taker sooner than his antithesis will be ready for him. All of the world as we know it could be lost."

"Instead of just this village?" Revek asked. "I'm willing to take that chance. Those who gain should stand ready to take the risks as well."

Narros met the other man's gaze. "You don't know what you've done."

"I know exactly what I've done," Revek said. "I've saved this village in spite of your best efforts to sacrifice it."

"No," Narros said. "You may have doomed it."

"How?"

"By allowing it to be exposed in the world again. Shielded and hidden from the Taker, there was—and perhaps will be—a chance that it could go unfound."

Revek didn't speak.

"Tell me where Vessid is," Narros demanded.

Revek's answer came reluctantly, prompted by the glower Harric added. "He's gone to remove that with which you would doom us."

Gathering his thoughts, Narros said, "You choose to believe that the Taker is a myth, a bit of propaganda embellished by the locathah. Yet you fear it."

"Whatever its true nature, the circlet represents ill fortune," Revek said. "Nothing good can come of it."

"That fear is real," Narros said, "because the threat is real. And you know it. Deep inside, you know it's real." It had been that fear, deep and resonating as a whale sounding, that had convinced him to take possession of the circlet when he'd been asked.

Revek said nothing for a time, chewing at his lower lip and unable to meet the shaman's gaze. "Do you fear it, Narros? Do you fear the prophecy?"

"Every day," Narros answered truthfully. His honesty came about the circlet as easily as admitting his love for his mate.

"Then why not be rid of it?"

"Because it's not that easy."

"But Eadro—"

"Eadro," Narros said, "has made his own agreements in this matter. I've asked all the questions and made all the demands that are in your head now. All that remains are Eadro's counsels. It's up to us to follow them. Tell me where Vessid is. Go with me."

"No," Revek answered hoarsely.

Narros stared at the man. "Then let it be on your head, Revek." He took the pendant from his neck, a cluster of gray pebbles in the shape of spiral, Eadro's symbol. He spoke the word that had been handed down to him by Kallos. The pendant rose from his open palm, floating toward the northern gateway at the top of the domed general assembly hall.

Revek's eyes widened, understanding dawning.

"They are linked," Narros said. "I'll find the circlet, and I'll find Vessid. If you went with me, perhaps you could prevent the bloodshed that might follow."

"Whatever the blood," Revek said, "it'll be on your hands."

Turning to Harric, Narros said, "Time is working against us."

"I'll get a group together," Harric offered.

"You can't do that," Revek protested.

In the blink of an eye, the chief pulled his crossbow from over his shoulder. A fishbone quarrel lay already nocked in the groove, the scaled fins prominent on the shaft. Revek's guards shifted uncertainly, not expecting this turn of events.

"Don't," Harric commanded softly. "If you move, I'll put this bolt in Revek's gullet."

"You overstep yourself," Revek warned, but his voice quavered. "Rest assured, I'll—"

"Die in a lot of pain," Harric promised him, "if you make a wrong move or say a wrong word."

Narros wasn't surprised Harric backed him. The merman chief had known about the arrangement for the circlet, as had every chief since it had been given to the shamans for safekeeping.

"Stay here, Revek," Harric warned. "If I see you outside of this city, I'll dispense with the formal charges I'm going to bring against you and deal with you directly." The merman chief waved to Narros.

The shaman flipped his tail, guiding himself toward the northern gateway. Zonn was at his side.

"Don't hurt my son!" Revek called up. "Don't hurt my son, Narros, or I'll spend the rest of my days ruining you."

Narros made no response, concentrating on the task that lay ahead of him. He feared the threat of the Taker more than any vengeance Revek might promise him.

♦ ♦ ♦

Narros spotted the shadow of the cog draping the water above him, the light of the coming morning already touching the sky with pink and yellow fingers. The color ran deep, plunging down into the ocean to touch everything in the shadowy depths. It seemed as though a newer, brighter world was dawning below as well. He paused, holding his place some seventy feet below with a flip of his tail. They'd swum for hours, following the pendant.

Harric rose up beside him, his trident clenched in his fist. "Vessid and his companions are there?"

Narros nodded, holding out his palm where the spiral pendant still floated. When he closed his hand around it, he felt the pendant's insistent tug toward the ship. "Instead of merely hiding the circlet," he said, "Revek must have arranged to sell it."

"Even protecting the village as he said he was trying to do," Harric said, studying the ship above them, "Revek would find a way to turn a profit at it." He looked at the shaman. "Perhaps the device would be safer on land."

"No," Narros replied. "The surface dwellers would poke and pry with their magic, perhaps finding a way to break the enchantment holding the Taker in his slumber. They won't fear the tale as we do. They've not been properly taught. " No, the surface world was definitely the last place the circlet needed to go.

"We won't be able to take it without force."

"I know. May Eadro aid us and keep us in His sight."

"Did you recognize the ship?" Harric asked.

Narros shook his head, too tired to even summon up the image of the ship in his mind again.

"It's *Wayfarer*."

The shaman recognized the name at once. *Wayfarer* held a place of infamy among the merfolk. Helmed by Captain Kenson, *Wayfarer* had a reputation for bloodletting and piracy. Commissioned by some of the wizards of the darker arts around Calimport, Kenson captured young merboys and mergirls for cruel and lethal experiments. There were some whom the captain scooped up in his nets for the festhalls of the coastal cities that wanted exotic fare.

In all his years around the reef, Narros had never seen Kenson, but the shaman had labored long among his own people and those near the coastal cities who would listen to urge them not to trade with the man. As a result of his position among his people, Kenson's trade had been cut drastically.

"Why would Revek deal with Kenson?" Narros asked.

"Because he had the most gold in his pocket at the time," Harric ventured. "It's the only thing that would have drawn Revek."

Narros nodded, knowing it was true. "He's certain to have a buyer for the circlet. Someone who knows his or her way around things magical. We can't allow him to escape."

Harric waved his trident, summoning the forty mermen warriors from the kelp lining the ocean bed. At less than a hundred feet deep here, the sea bed was a mass of twisted kelp growth, loose rock, and shells. The mermen swam rapidly toward the surface, their weapons at the ready.

Narros swam with them, a crossbow in his arms, a quiver of fishbone arrows tied around his waist. Zonn and Mihter cut through the water. Zonn's face was calm and composed while his younger brother's showed a savage joy.

Vessid and his companions floated near the surface beside the trading vessel. They numbered ten now, but Narros

recognized the young man by his shock of fiery hair and the decorative combat harness studded with jewels.

Less than thirty feet from the ship, Vessid's group spotted the approaching mermen. They scattered, finning through the water and drawing their weapons.

Narros watched as Mihter drove himself directly at Vessid, going on the attack at once. Vessid was larger, older, and he was able to wait on Mihter's approach.

Fear touched the shaman's heart, knowing he was about to see his youngest son die or be severely wounded at the least. Waiting till the last minute, Vessid rammed his trident at Mihter's face, the angled tines glinting diamond-bright in the morning light reflected through the water.

Mihter blocked with his own trident, tangling them. Then he rolled over toward his opponent, using his momentum and hanging onto the trident's haft to pivot. He slammed his tail into Vessid's face. The sound of the impact echoed through the water. Blood streamered from Vessid's face where Mihter's fins had slashed him.

Vessid struggled, trying to recover, but Mihter was on him, attacking with a shark's single-minded savagery. He shoved the tridents away, reaching for Vessid with one hand while he ripped his dagger free with the other. Vessid tried to defend himself, reaching for his own dagger. Mihter headbutted him in the face, then finned hard again, diving beneath Vessid's left arm and coming up behind him. He locked Vessid, roping his arm under Vessid's and clapping his hand behind the other man's neck.

Mihter's dagger flashed as it slid under Vessid's chin, pressing the blade's edge against his throat.

"No!" Narros shouted, swimming closer. "Don't kill him."

For a moment, he didn't think even his command would stay Mihter's hand. But the blade didn't bite any further into Vessid's flesh.

Narros finned up to meet the younger man's gaze. "Where's the circlet?"

"Umberlee take you into her dark embrace," Vessid cursed. He struggled against Mihter's grip.

Without hesitation, Mihter let the blade draw blood, not enough to hurt Vessid, but enough to remind the merman that the prospect still existed.

Narros repeated his question.

"We gave it to the ship's captain," Vessid answered. "Let the surface dwellers weather the Taker's wrath. If such a thing even exists. My father—"

"Your father is a fool," Narros said. He looked at his youngest son. "Let him go. Harric can deal with him later. He's only a thief. The real threat remains above."

Released, Vessid flicked his tail in anger but didn't swim away. His face revealed he'd been stung by the accusation of being considered a thief instead of a hero, as his father had undoubtedly called him.

Narros ignored him, stroking for the surface. None of Vessid's companions had put up a fight. That came from the cog as the surface dwellers reacted to the threat from the new arrivals.

Sailors lined the railing in a rush. Luckily, only a few of them had bows. Less than a dozen arrows struck the water, quickly losing their momentum. Someone shouted orders to raise the sails, the voice muffled by the depths. In seconds, the cloth raised, filling with the easterly breeze.

Narros surfaced beside Harric, who whipped a grappling hook on a line over his head. The merman chieftain let fly, and the hook arced over the railing. He drew the line taut, lodging the hook against the railing.

A sailor ran for the line, lifting a handaxe and preparing to cut the rope.

Lifting his crossbow, Narros shot at the sailor. The quarrel caught the man in the side, throwing him off-stride and knocking him to the deck. "They mustn't get away," the shaman said, reloading the crossbow.

"They won't," Harric promised, hauling tight on the grappling line. "We're going to take the ship before it gets underway."

Other grappling hooks sailed over the railing. Some of them were cut even as they pulled tight, but crossbow shots drove the sailors to cover. Narros knew the sailors would be versed in the mermen's tactics of grappling a ship and knocking a hole in the bottom to sink it. Their only hope lay in getting away before enough of the grappling hooks could be set.

The cog gained speed, pulling in the direction of the wind, riding high on the white-capped waves. Most of the sails were up now, and the vessel dragged the few mermen who'd set grappling lines after it.

Narros swam after Harric, seizing the grappling line and adding his strength to the chieftain's. "Seize hold!" Harric commanded.

Immediately, the other mermen swam to the grappling ropes and hauled on them. The effect on the cog showed at once as it mired down in the water.

"They must be carrying a large cargo in the hold," Harric said, "for it to wallow so heavily in the water."

Narros stared up at the ship only thirty feet away. The bow-carrying sailors ran to the railing and took aim.

"Dive!" Harric roared, following his own advice.

Narros followed the merman chief beneath the waterline as arrows splintered the waves. Twenty feet below the water, the arrows lost speed and drifted harmlessly by. At Harric's instruction, the mermen hauled on the grappling lines again, tugging the cog more deeply into the ocean. Enough of them remained above the sea line to protect the grappling lines with their crossbows.

"Numo," Harric called out. "Mihter."

Mihter and another of the young mermen nearby looked at the chief.

"Attack the bottom of the ship," Harric instructed. "Let them know what we're capable of."

Both young warriors loosed the ropes they'd been holding and swam for the cog's hull. They freed their tridents and stabbed them deep into the hardened wood. Chips immediately tore away. It would take some time to break through and flood the hold, but the mermen dragging on the grappling lines would provide that time.

"Now," Harric said, facing Narros as they were pulled through the water, "can you convince them to give up the circlet, or do we take their ship into the sea? I'd rather not earn any enmity if we don't have to."

"I'll try." Narros reached into the fishskin pouch at his side. It contained the objects he needed for the spells given to him by Eadro through prayer. He selected a bit of lodestone from the pouch and clasped it tightly in his fist.

Where the spiral pendant had allowed him to follow in the general direction of the circlet, the spell he used now would let him know exactly where the circlet was aboard the ship. He prayed, concentrating on the lodestone in his hand, and felt the power fill him while he held onto the grappling line with his other hand. Then he built the image of the circlet in his head, until the vision was perfect as he could make it from all the long years of being associated with it.

His senses seemed to leave his body, though he remained aware of his hand on the grappling line. Generally, the spell would point him in the direction of the object he sought, but the tie to the circlet was so strong and his need so great that he received a clear image of the circlet in a locked cabinet in small cabin equipped with a fold-out desk that had navigation charts spread out across it. Since there was only a single bed, though it was small, Narros assumed the room belonged to the captain.

He opened his eyes, feeling drained and knowing the spell had taken more from him than normal, but that had to have been at Eadro's wish and he accepted it. He released the grappling line and clapped Harric on the shoulder. Then he propelled himself upward with quick, hard strokes of his tail.

When he broke the surface, two archers shot at him. He avoided the arrows easily. The archers hadn't come close because the mermen pulling on the grappling lines caused the deck to pitch and fight against the waves.

Narros submerged himself up to his chin then called out over the sound of the wind and the waves slapping the cog's hull. He saw her name now, written on her bow: *Wayfarer*. "Let me speak to the captain."

A man in green breeches and a black shirt held up an arm. The archers kept their arrows nocked and didn't fire again.

"I'm Captain Kenson," the man roared back. "Who the hell are you?"

"I am called Narros," the shaman replied. Above the ocean's surface, he found it harder to speak, having to force air through his trachea hard enough to carry to the cog. The medium of air wasn't as generous as water, requiring more effort to broadcast as far.

"I know you." Kenson's face darkened. "You've cost me a lot of trade in these waters, godspeaker."

"That I've failed in costing you all of it grieves me," Narros responded.

"Tell your people to release my ship, or their deaths are going to be on your hands."

"You're the second person today to tell me that," Narros replied angrily. Kenson didn't just represent a threat concerning the circlet; the man also represented the loss of merchildren from the community. "I came this morning ready to take on that responsibility, because doing so would prevent even more deaths. I won't back down now, Captain Kenson."

The captain's black hair blew in the wind, and his hard brown gaze locked on the shaman. "You're making a mistake."

"No mistake," Narros called back. "Feel the vibration running through your ship? Even now warriors are working to break through your hold and sink your vessel."

Kenson gestured to one of his sailors. The man ran toward the hold.

"You made a bad bargain," Narros went on. "That circlet isn't for you. Give it back, and we'll let you live." And only then, the shaman knew, because he didn't want to risk the circlet getting lost in the tricky currents that sometimes wound through the area.

The sailor returned and quickly conferred with his captain.

Kenson regarded Narros with even more hate, his eyes blazing. He shouted orders to his men, who ran quickly toward the grappling lines.

The mermen shot quarrels at them, but the same pitching deck that prevented the quarrels of the sailors from finding targets easily also prevented the mermen from hitting their marks.

Narros held the spiral pendant hanging around his neck and prayed, summoning up the power he needed. He gestured toward the ship.

An insubstantial haze sped from his hand and coiled restlessly on *Wayfarer's* deck, settling in the center, near the captain's quarters that Narros had seen in the vision earlier. The sailors jumped back, watching as a wyvern took form.

Thirty-five feet tall, the wyvern closely resembled a dragon, with a fierce head four feet long and a mouth filled with sharp teeth. Leathery brown hide covered it from the claws of its hind feet and long tail to the top of its head. The brown gave way to mouse-gray wings that flared from its upper arms in a fifty-foot wingspread.

The sailors tried to scatter, but several of them fell to the deck unconscious. Archers fired arrows at it, but they passed through.

The wyvern was an illusionary force created by Narros's spell, not capable of actual physical contact, but its touch caused paralysis. The beast moved restlessly, staying near the circlet to guard it as Narros had conjured it to do. The trick would be to convince the ship's captain that he had complete control over it.

"Stop!" Narros floated in the water, holding his hand up like he was commanding the wyvern. The illusion didn't move, following its design to stay and protect the circlet.

The sailors fell back to the stern and leaped into the bow castle, retreating before the creature.

"What's it going to be, captain?" Narros demanded. "Return the circlet, and we'll let your ship go free."

Wayfarer had come almost to a dead halt in the water despite the billowing sails. Kenson looked at his men, taking cover around the ship. "All right, you damned seaspawn. Call off your hellish beast, and I'll get the circlet."

Narros hesitated, knowing if he ended the spell he wouldn't be able to summon it back immediately. Still, the surface dwellers were afraid of what he might be able to do. Most men feared magic in any form, and the threat of breaking through the hull from underneath remained. Making his decision, he banished the spell.

The wyvern returned to a hazy mist that blew away over the bowsprit and disappeared in the wind.

Kenson strode away from the railing and returned a moment later. "They took my gold," he said, holding the circlet in his hands.

Narros saw the reticence in the man's poise. Kenson was a man used giving commands, not taking them. "You know who you dealt with," the shaman said. "Take your problems up with him. I've dealt with you as fairly as I'm able, and with far more generosity than you deserve."

Without another word, Kenson tossed the circlet high into the air.

Narros caught it in his fist, examining it to make sure no damage had been done to it. With the magic inherent in the object, he didn't think that was possible. It had survived for thousands of years.

The circlet was painstakingly crafted. Chipped from a single black sapphire, it held several shark figures around the headband in a twisting serpentine pattern standing out in bas-relief.

Narros felt comforted by the circlet's return, but the familiar feeling of dread settled onto him as well, closing around his heart like an icy fist. He ducked beneath the waves and told Harric, who called the mermen off the grappling lines.

Surfacing again, Narros watched *Wayfarer* sail away over the horizon. Part of him wished that he could just give the circlet back and hope that the curse would bypass his village, but that wasn't what Eadro had agreed to as His part of the bargain.

Above all else, Narros believed in his faith. He'd based his life on it, and perhaps his death as well.

26 Chess 1355, Year of the Harp

The Taker came in the night, and Narros woke from his nightmare, feeling the awful presence of the dark thing gliding silently toward the reef. It hadn't been able to mask itself from his divinely enhanced senses. Or maybe the Taker had wanted him to know it was coming. The shaman reached out with his hands, the webbing between his fingers grabbing hold of the water and yanking him from the mossy bed.

He flipped his tail and swam to the window facing the south, instinctively knowing the attack was coming from that direction.

Even in the darkness, he saw the black triangle swooping in from the lower depths leading up to the reef. For a moment, the shape looked small, almost insignificant. Except for the fear that thrilled through Narros. It shook him, nailing his hands onto the windowsill and locking him into place. With increasing horror, he watched it swell into view. Time seemed to slow down, but he measured it in heartbeats, knowing each leaden thump came rapidly despite how it felt.

He pushed away from the window, seeing that the looming blackness that was the Taker had spread, almost filling the horizon. It undulated, then a section of it grazed the reef structures further down the incline. Coral shattered, the vibrations echoing through the water, slamming into Narros in crescendoing waves.

The crunching destruction of the reef woke Klyss. Narros swam to the bed with his trident in hand, holding onto Klyss's hand with his other.

"What is it?" she asked.

Narros couldn't answer, the fear too strong in him. He swam toward the temple, knowing the Taker would be drawn there. He weaved his fingers in with Klyss's, pulling her after him.

Zonn and Mihter came from their rooms, swimming down toward him. "Father, what is it?" Mihter demanded.

"The Taker," Narros stated. It could be no other. Vibrations of the collapsing reef shuddered through the home, mixed in now with the screams of the injured and dying. There were dozens of them. He turned to Zonn. "Take your mother to safety."

"Where?" Zonn asked, taking his mother by the arm.

"Outside the city," Narros answered. "There'll be no reason for the Taker to go anywhere else."

"Husband—" Klyss said.

"Go," Narros told her hoarsely. "I'll rejoin you when I can."

"But you can't hold onto the circlet," she told him. "You know that."

"And I can't just let him seize it without a fight," Narros told her. He felt trapped between his fear and his sense of duty. "Please. Go."

Zonn tugged gently on her arm and she went with him.

Scared and somehow numbed, Narros swam down the tunnel leading to the temple. The corridor captured the tortured sounds of wounded, rolling with the echo of their fear and despair. His head throbbed, part of it from the headache the last few nights of sleepless nightmares had given him, and part of it from the pain that still plagued him from his jaw, all

of it intensified by the helpless feeling swirling inside him like a cyclone. Mihter swam at his side, grim and aggressive.

"Mihter," Narros said, "please go with your brother and mother."

"And leave you to face the Taker by yourself?" Mihter shook his head. "I can't do that."

"And I can't bear to watch you die, my son."

Mihter grinned boldly. "Then let's see that neither one of us dies."

Knowing there was no use arguing with his son, Narros swam into the main temple then up to the gateways leading out into the ocean. He looked to the south and saw the great shadow that approached, taking shape out of the dark water. It was black as coal and flared out in all directions, diamond-shaped.

The Taker crashed into another section of the reef, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Chunks and bits of coral floated slowly through the water, thrown for a hundred yards from the explosive impacts. Silt swirled through the ocean like fog.

Narros swam to the circlet's hiding place. He removed it from the drawer and prayed with all the faith and desperation inside him. Then he covered the circlet with his hands, obscuring as much of the surface as he could. He watched the spell take effect, watched as it faded from sight. He hoped it would be enough to hide the circlet from the Taker's view. Still holding onto the circlet, the shaman turned to face the advancing horror.

The shadow of the Taker was so large that Narros didn't know how fast it was approaching. The Taker slammed into the reef again, destroying in seconds what it had taken nature and the mermen hundreds of years to build. The explosion of coral swept toward Narros and Mihter, slivers gliding through the water to hammer into the sides of the temple with deep, basso bonging noises.

Narros knew the trident in his hands would be ineffectual against the Taker, just as his spells would be. It was as Eadro had told the first priest all those years ago. His attempt to hide the circlet had failed.

The shaman called on his god as the sections of the reef nearest him collapsed. Then the Taker slammed into the temple. Flames boiled out of the Taker, wrapping Narros in their steamy embrace. Narros knew the temple was coming apart under him, knew that he was badly hurt, and then he knew no more.

♦ ♦ ♦

The whole reef village lay strewn in disheveled ruin. Broken coral draped the gentle hillside, some of it in pebbles and some of it in room-sized chunks. All the destruction was barely seen through the murky clouds of silt stirred up from the ocean bed by the mass burials. Even after hours of collecting the dead, there were still corpses floating in the water, prey for the marine scavengers that had already gathered.

Badly burned by his exposure to the Taker's flames, his body covered in blisters and blackened skin, Narros could only lay on the moss bed Klyss had made for him while she worked to help save those who could be helped. Mihter had died in the attack. The shaman had wakened next to his son's body, surprised that he himself had survived.

He had known that he would. According to the prophecy, there yet remained one task left to fulfill that only he could do.

Half-blind with pain, Narros watched the work, despairing at how slowly it was going. The dead far outnumbered the living. He guessed that perhaps as many as seventy of his people might yet live, but even that figure may have been optimistic.

Klyss swam to him out of the silt-fogged water, her face already revealing the news she bore. Wordlessly, she cradled Narros's head in her lap. Tears glittered in her eyes, plucked away by the ocean's gentle caress.

"Zonn?" he asked. After he'd gotten his mother to safety, Zonn had returned, hoping to join his father and brother in battle.

"They found him," she said quietly. "We lost both our sons, Narros." She wept, sobs wracking her body.

He wrapped an arm around her, ignoring the pain that almost made him pass out, and offered what comfort he could.

"Well, godspeaker, see what you have wrought!"

Narros glanced up, seeing Revek and Vessid floating in front of him. Both had survived the attack, as well as the rest of the merchant's family. "I didn't do this," the shaman replied.

"You could have gotten rid of the damned circlet."

"That wasn't how things were supposed to be," Narros said. "We were supposed to hide the circlet as long as we could, keep it from the rest of the world that maybe even memory of the Taker would vanish from the history of this world."

Revek cursed him, calling every vile name his knowledge of languages gave him.

"Enough!" Harric swam out of the silt-shrouded depths to join them. One of his arms was in a sling and cuts and abrasions adorned his body, but there was no doubting his prowess. "Go away, Revek, and help those people that need it. Be generous with your ability to aid, not to assign blame."

Vessid moved forward.

"Do it, boy," Harric promised, "and your father will be piling stones on your grave as they're doing for those out there."

"You haven't heard the end of this," Revek said, pulling his son back. Together, they swam away.

"Thank you," Narros said.

Harric nodded. "I see Klyss found you."

"Yes."

"I'm sorry for your loss, my friend."

Even after all his years of experience, Narros had no words for what was in his heart.

"They'll have them all buried," the merman chief said a few minutes later. "Maybe not today or even tomorrow, but soon. And they'll want to know what to do. The reef is too damaged to rebuild. What do I tell them?"

"We're not going to live here any longer," Narros said. "There's only one place we can go."

"Where?"

"Waterdeep," Narros answered without hesitation.

Harric stared at him in disbelief.

"The prophecies say that the Taker will first attack the surface dwellers," Narros went on, "at the city that is their most beloved, the center of their knowledge, and that best represents all that makes them the strong and proud people they are."

"That's a long way to go," Harric commented.

"Yes." Narros stared at the carnage that was left of his city, of his world. "But it'll be a distance they'll be willing to travel for a chance at the vengeance that is their right."

Harric was silent for a moment, then asked quietly, "Will the Taker be defeated there?"

"No," Narros answered, wishing he hadn't been asked that question. He could offer his friend only the truth. "Waterdeep will be the first of those to fall beneath the Taker's fury and the dark army that will be his to assemble."

"Then why go there?" Harric demanded.

"There's another part of the prophecy that must be played out," Narros said. "In Waterdeep, I'll find the Taleweaver, the human bard who will sing the song that will unite those who live above and those who live below in this war that will seek to consume our worlds." He turned to gaze at the chief. "It's my duty, my friend, to set him on his path, to put him toward the one who will save us from the Taker."

29 Chess 1355, Year of the Harp

On the final day of the burials, Narros was strong enough to preside over the mass funerals. The mermen floated somberly in the ocean's depths, some alone and some holding onto each other, taking strength and giving it. The piles of rocks and coral chunks from the reefs scattered across the ocean floor covering the graves looked stark, forbidding.

Many of those living, the shaman knew, faulted him for his role in the deaths and destruction. Revek continued a personal vendetta to brand him a traitor to their people. Narros looked into the eyes of his community around him, feeling their sorrow and anger. His own loss was so strong in his heart it was hard to remain focused.

The echoes of the last words of the Leaving Ritual pealed around him. He glanced at the people before him, sliding his hand into Klyss's. She squeezed his gently.

"My friends," Narros said, "my family." His voice broke and he made himself be strong enough to go on. "We have lost much here, but our sacrifices, our pain, are not without notice. Eadro, the Deliverer, the Lord of the Sunlit Shadows, put this burden before us, and He will see us made the stronger for it."

"False and foolish pride, godspeaker!" Revek shouted from the mass of people floating in the water. "You doomed these people, left them bereft of homes, wealth, family, and friends!"

"Then Eadro will punish me," Narros replied.

"He already has!" Revek shouted. "You've lost both your sons!"

The people around the merchant swam away from him, no longer wanting to be associated with him.

Narros took that as a sign of hope, and told them what he hoped to find in Waterdeep. "At the least, they will give us a home," he finished. "And when the Taker rises again, as he will, I will find a way to help fight him. We can rebuild. It's our way; the way it always has been as we've lived with everything the ocean currents have brought before us. We were made to swim sometimes against those currents, and sometimes to swim with them. I choose to follow Eadro."

♦ ♦ ♦

All of them left that afternoon. Some, Narros knew, because they believed in his words, and some because they had nowhere else to go. Harric led his warriors, leaning on the loyalty they showed him to influence the others.

The dispossessed families took few belongings. Little remained, and they knew the journey ahead of them was going to be too arduous to try to take much.

Narros took only three things: Klyss's painting of their sons which had miraculously escaped the destruction of the reef city, an emerald bracelet Zonn had worn, and his desire for revenge.

The painting he planned to hang in the home they made at Waterdeep. The emerald bracelet he would pray over, imbue with the magic his prayers gave him, and fashion into a gift for the Taleweaver, one that would allow him to journey under the water. The anger he would use to live in spite of the harsh journey and his wounds.

He swam for Waterdeep, knowing that the dark currents feeding the Taker would soon take him there as well. Narros would be waiting.

Mel Odom lives in the wilds of Oaklahoma where elves are known to wear cowboy hats and drive eighteen-wheelers through gates to other worlds. Look for the rest of the Threat From The Sea trilogy coming soon.

Convention Calendar

JANUARY

Weekend in Procampur

The Procampur expansion to the LIVING CITY™ Campaign now has its own convention. Events: Five different tournaments and an interactive event, all at the following locations:

January 1–3 💻
Contact: Jay Fisher, 2690 Drew Street Apt. 1108, Clearwater, FL 33759. Email: jlorien@concentric.net. Website: http://www.concentric.net/~jlorien/conline/index.html.

January 8–10 FL
Contact: Leonard Dessert, 8031 Blue Trail, Orlando, FL 32822. Email: lady-n-thewizard@unforgettable.com.

January 9–10 CO
Contact: Gary S. Watkins, 10040 Lewis Ct., Westminster, CO 80021-3731. Email: dragon0525@aol.com. Website: http://www.bengames.org/~whitet/bencon/.

January 9–10 ✳
Contact: Steve Campey, 267 B Hazel St., Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3P1, Canada. Email: camp6430@mach1.wlu.ca.

Jan 15–17 OR
Contact: Bob Ehmann at 125 S. E. Court, Suite 4, Pendleton, Oregon 97801. Email: rehmann@ucinet.com.

Jan 15–17 OR
Contact: Goon Pattanumotana, 11527-2 Compass Point Drive North, San Diego, CA. Email: gpattanumo@aol.com.

Jan 22–24 WI
Contact: Thomas Terrill at P.O. Box 353, MLH 1102, Milwaukee, WI 53202-0353. Email: terrillt@execpc.com. Website: http://www.msoe.edu/st_orgs/gaming/convention.html.

January 23–24 CA
Contact: Dan Cooper, 3220 Watt Ave: Apt #9, Sacramento, CA 95821. Email captainharlock@worldnet.att.net.

January 23–24 OH
Contact: Mark Middleton, 5232 Carifa Ct, Hilliard, OH 43026. Email: mmiddlet@columbus.rr.com.

Jan 29–31 OK
Contact: Melissa Maurer, 1313 B George Avenue, Norman, OK 73072. Email: mmaurer@ou.edu.

FEBRUARY

DunDraCon XXIII

February 12–15 CA
San Ramon Marriot, San Ramon, CA. Events: Almost every roleplaying game in print, seminars, tournaments, miniatures, painting contest, and a flea market. For more information contact: DunDraCon Inc., 1145 Talbot Avenue, Albany, CA 94706.

Winter Fantasy

February 25–28 IL
Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois. Guests: To be announced. Events: Games, seminars, demos, and tournaments including: *Magic*® Pro Tour Qualifier for New York and RPGA® Network events. Pre-registration: weekend badge $30, one day $12. Onsite: weekend badge $35, one day $15. Contact: Andon Unlimited, 129 N. Hamilton, Columbus, Ohio 43213. Email: andon@aol.com. Preregister online at www.andonunlimited.com.

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✳ Canadian convention
✪ European convention
💻 Online convention

Jeepers!!
You're sittin' on a gold mine!

Check out *The Duelist* Price Index, coming in next month's issue.
Complete **Magic** card price list, tradability ratings, and a regular column on the financial aspects of playing **Magic**.

All this in one magazine, along with the most in-depth **Magic** strategy, complete Standard player's guide with up-to-date rulings and errata, inside information about the game you love, and unparalleled coverage of the trading card game industry.

THE DUELIST
PRICE INDEX

A complete guide to selling and trading **Magic** *cards.*

MARCH

ConJuration 4
March 5–6 *
William Shatner Building, McGill University, Québec, Canada. Events: roleplaying, LARP, board games, miniatures, CCGs, movies, panels, workshops, and more. Registration: $7 (Canadian) at the door. For more information contact: McGill Gamer's Guild, 3480 McTavish St., Montreal, PQ H2A 1X9.

MegaCon '99
March 5–7 FL
Orlando Expo Centre, Orlando, FL. Special Guests: Terry Brooks and Alex Ross. Events: Gaming tournaments, demos, panels, 24-hour anime room, plus an art show and auction. Contact: Quantum Cat Entertainment, 270 Orange Terrace, Winter Park, FL 32789.

Stellar Con 23
March 19–21 NC
Holiday Inn, Market Square, High Market, NC. Guests: Aaron Allston, Steven S. Long, Jack L. Chalker, Jody Lynn Nye, Sean Patrick Fannon. Registration: $15 before January 1, $20 between January 1 and March 1, $30 after. Contact: Stellar Con 23, Box 4 Elliot University Center, UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412. Website: www.uncg.edu/student.groups/sf/stellarcon.htm.

Egyptian Campaign
March 26–28 IL
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL. Events: RPGA Network, AD&D® game, *Shadowrun®*, *Battletech®*, *Warhammer®*, *Vampire®*, *Diplomacy®*, *Axis & Allies®*, *Magic®*, *Star Fleet Battles®*, *Car Wars®*, and many other board, miniature, card, and roleplaying games. Contact: Egyptian Campaign 1999, % SIUC Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425. Email: ecgamecon@aol.com. Website: www.siu.edu/~gamesoc.

APRIL

OpCon
April 24 IL
Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, IL. Guests: Mary Francis Zambreno and Susan Van Camp. Website: http://oprfhs.org/activ/scifi/opcon.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

Play-By-Mail Game

Fifty realms will wage war across a million square miles of unexplored territory. Join them.

The Ultimate Play-By-Mail Campaign!

Incredible laser graphics. Get detailed maps with each bi-weekly campaign report.

Amazing detail! Face drow and deva, liches and lamia, goblins and gods. Over 600 mapped sites!

Simple to learn. Fun to play. Can you conquer the Savage North? An entire realm is yours to command!

Ask us about our other games also!

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, and FORGOTTEN REALMS are trademarks of TSR, Inc. © 1994 TSR, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Reality Simulations, Inc. under license from TSR, Inc.

WRITE FOR **FREE**, NO OBLIGATION, SET-UP AND RULES!

Reality Simulations, Inc.
P.O. Box 22400
Tempe, AZ 85285

VOICE: (602) 967-7979
FAX: (602) 894-2028
INTERNET: RSI @Reality.Com

PC Portraits

Psionicists

by Brad McDevitt

Brad's recent assignments from us have tended toward the bizarre: giant intelligent bugs, restless souls, and other such nightmares. Thus, he welcomed this lighthearted assignment, creating fourteen relatively normal psionicists. When asked which he'd most like to play, Brad gurgled and hung up the phone.

The Threat from the Sea

An Old Evil has slumbered for centuries beneath the Shining sea ... until now.

by
Mel Odom

illustrated by
Mike Vilardi

FOR CENTURIES, THE SEA OF SWORDS, the Trackless Sea, and the Shining Sea have provided inestimable bounties from their depths: fish, pearls, precious gemstones, even the sunken treasures of unlucky voyagers. Fishermen sail the emerald and sapphire waters, catching dozens of kinds of fish that fill plates, bowls, and stewpots along the coast. Inland countries covet those catches as rare delicacies available only through magical preservation spells or by traveling to the coastal cities.

The seas are the lifeblood of Faerûn and all of Toril, yet most surface dwellers give little thought to what lies beneath the waves. Now, those years of taking the seas for granted have come to an end. For thousands of years an Old Evil has been lurking in the crumbled remains of an empire lying in the Shining Sea, waiting to be awakened by one able to tie the threads of fable and myth together and find the truth.

The Old Evil has been mentioned in all the histories of the undersea creatures. He will rise again, they've prophesied, and break down societies above and below the waves. He has many names, but he is most often called the Taker.

In 1354 DR, a malenti named Laaqueel, a sahuagin priestess of Sekolah, the Shark God, goes to the Shining Sea to seek the truth about myths she's found referring to a mysterious being called "One Who Swims With Sekolah." What she discovers is the Taker, the Old Evil that will shake down cities and take the seas from the surface dwellers. His name is Iakhovas, and he spends fifteen years marshaling his forces, weaving complex plots, and gathering the power he needs to strike at the surface dwellers.

Posing as a prince of the sahuagin, Iakhovas arranges sea devil attacks along the coast. Waterdeep, proud City of Splendors, is the first to feel Iakhovas's wrath, but not the last.

The attacks continue and Iakhovas adds to his treasure-trove of magical weapons. He escalates those encounters into an all-out war against the surface world that will forever change the geography of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

Mel Odom is the author of Rising Tide, *the first volume of the Threat From the Sea Trilogy, as well as the author of* The Lost Library of Cormanthyr. *TSR Editor Phil Athans talked to him about the trilogy and asked if he wanted to get his feet wet in the seas around Faerûn. Mel said, in his Oklahoma drawl, "Shore."*

16th-Level Human Bard

Strength	11
Dexterity	15
Constitution	15
Intelligence	13
Wisdom	14
Charisma	16
AC	9
THAC0	13
Hit Points	76
Alignment	Neutral Good
Special Attacks	Nil
Special Defenses	Influence reactions, rally allies, countersong
Size	M (5'9")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing (16), Musical Instrument (14), Reading/Writing (14), Local History (16), Ancient History (12), Disguise (15), Reading Lips (11), Tumbling (15), Artistic Ability (14), Modern Languages (13), Land-Based Riding (17).

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff (has concealed blades in both ends), Composite Long Bow, Knife, Short Sword, Long Sword.

Appearance: Pacys is 76 years old, lean from years of traveling on the road, but flexible and strong enough to take care of himself. He shaves his head, but his eyebrows are silvery. His skin has browned to the color of old leather, and his clean-shaven face is covered with wrinkles. His eyes are light hazel. Although he's a bard, he doesn't wear the colorful clothing favored by most of those in his trade, preferring more subtle shades. He appears very much to be a common man.

His strength is his voice, and he can catch the attention of even the rowdiest crowds when he starts singing or telling tales. He's never seen anywhere without his yarting and often underscores even a casual conversation with a musical background, though others aren't always aware of it.

Magical Items: He was given an emerald *bracelet of water breathing and free action* by the mermen after the Battle for Waterdeep. He also carries a *bag of holding* containing the few mementos he's saved over the years. He never keeps much, preferring to travel light. His treasures are his songs, crafted and borrowed.

Background: Born in Maskyr's Eye in the Vast, Pacys was raised to be a farmer and horse breeder. Wanderlust claimed his soul, though, and when he saw Ardynn, a wandering bard, sing at the Wizard's Hand inn, he fell in love with her and ran away to join her on the road. While traveling, he learned to love music and discovered he was extremely talented. Though he and Ardynn went their separate ways, he maintained a love for her and was with her in Thar when she was killed by an orc ambush.

Roleplaying Notes: Pacys can be the life of the party, or he can be the fly on the wall. When he's entertaining, he can make blood boil in anticipation of a good fight, make strong men weep over lost loves, make weak men strong in their passions, and calm those who can count the rest of their days on the fingers of one hand. When he's working for information to use as the grist for a new song, there are few who can keep from telling everything they know.

The bard has an easy way about him that inspires trust and confidences. He's known been to write songs about real events yet change the names so no one is hurt, which is how he's able to make light of political scandal, or put a spin on the drinking songs in some taverns so the people of a city or village once again believe in their leaders.

Pacys lives on the road, in the houses of friends, temples where he's written hymns, brothels where he's entertained, and even in the homes of some great political figures who've hired him in the past to reach the people during a time of trouble. Places that have not heard of him are rare, and there is never a civilized area that has no home to offer its hearth to him on a cold night (and maybe to a few companions who accompany him on a quest).

Laaqueel

8th-Level Sahuagin Priestess

Strength	20 (17 on land)
Dexterity	16 (12 on land)
Constitution	14 (11 on land)
Intelligence	17
Wisdom	13
Charisma	9
AC	5
THAC0	11
Hit Points	61
Alignment	Lawful Neutral
Special Attacks	Claws, hands and feet that are retractable and hidden, blood frenzy when among sahuagin when combat is going on.
Special Defenses	Can detect invisible creatures at short-range while underwater
Size	M (5'10")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (16), Ancient Languages (17), Reading/Writing (18), Religion (13), Spellcraft (15), Direction Sense (14)

Weapon Proficiencies: Trident, Net, Crossbow. Laaqueel also fights as a sahuagin with the retractable finger and toe claws, as well as with a sahuagin's underwater battle skills. She's had to fight all of her life to prove her worth.

Appearance: Laaqueel is a malenti, one of the off-shoots of the sahuagin race that occur when born too closely to a sea elf village. Usually the malenti resemble sea elves in coloring, but Laaqueel's mutation further cursed her as different. Instead of the greenish or bluish skin coloring of the sea elves, she has the pinkish hue of a surface elf. Thus, she doesn't truly fit in anywhere, and even disguises are never perfect for long. Her hair is long and dark, and she usually wears it in a braid. By human standards, she's very beautiful (though with gills, upon closer inspection), but she thinks of herself as ugly. On the rare occasion that she goes among surface dwellers as an elf, she prefers warrior's clothing. Under the sea, she goes naked except for the sahuagin harnesses that support her weapons and pouches.

Magical Items: None.

Background: Laaqueel is over 200 years old and is at present a high priestess under Prince Iakhovas. As a malenti hatchling, she was spared by Baron Huaanton to be trained as a spy. She was almost killed when her teachers feared that her distinct coloration would prove useful only in spying on surface dwellers. Then Senior Priestess Ghaataag saw in her the promise and drive to become a priestess strong in the faith of Sekolah. Chiefly because there was nowhere else for Laaqueel to turn, she had to believe Sekolah had a place and a purpose for her. Her spying and studies among the surface dwellers led her to the myth of "One Who Swims With Sekolah." In seeking the truth of those stories, she discovered Iakhovas, who was to become know all across Faerûn as the Taker.

Roleplaying Notes: Whatever else she may be, Laaqueel is a believer. Her place in her society and in the scheme of events are there because the Shark God intends it. She takes slackers to task and brooks no questioning of faith. Her belief is the only thing that has kept her sane. In the surface world, she's often viewed as cold and aloof, but when someone is teaching her an ancient myth or story she wants to learn, she listens with a zealot's intensity.

When it comes to dealing with her enemies, she is quick and cold. She rarely spills blood except to serve Sekolah. She is focused and can be abrupt. She pursues with unflagging purpose anything she believes to be her duty.

3rd-Level Human Fighter

Strength:	15
Dexterity:	16
Constitution:	17
Intelligence:	14
Wisdom:	15
Charisma:	17
AC:	8
THAC0:	16
Hit Points:	36
Alignment:	Lawful Good
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	Nil
Size:	M (5'11")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Navigation (12), Reading/Writing (15), Carpentry (15), Seamanship (17).

Weapon Proficiencies: Cutlass, Bow, Gaff Hook, Knife, Trident.

Appearance: Jherek is 19 years old and comes across as very naive because he believes the best of most people. He's a skilled conversationalist and well-read when he finds someone he will talk to. He's built lean with broad shoulders and skin tanned brown as a nut from constant exposure to sun and sea. His light brown hair has highlights from the sun, he has pale gray eyes, and he always goes freshly shaven. He carries scars from nets and fishing line, as well as from combat against men and marine life. He wears sailor's clothes: breeches, loose shirts, and boots.

Magical Items: None.

Background: Jherek was born to one of the most vicious pirates on the Sea of Swords, Bloody Falkane the Wolf, captain of the *Bunyip*. Unwilling to step into his father's boots as a pirate, Jherek fled his destiny, arriving at Velen as a vagabond when he was twelve. He led a harsh life doing odd jobs and stealing to eat, then he got on as a carpenter's helper. By the end of the year he was hired by a shipbuilder, and acquired his first true friend in the form of Malorrie, a phantom. Malorrie is a unique phantom, a knight of some kind, Jherek is sure, but of mysterious origin.

Later, Jherek was hired by Madame Iitaar, a diviner who'd lost her husband. She's an old half-elf and one of the most respected people in Velen. After Jherek finished the patchwork of her roof, he stayed on and helped around her house, learning still more of the world and magical things, though he was no adept.

When Jherek turned 15, Madame Iitaar helped him find a berth on *Finaren's Butterfly*, a trading vessel that plied the Sword Coast. He's pursuing a destiny, pushed by a force that has rescued him upon occasion and whispers the words, "Live that you may serve." He's afraid to follow that voice, but his choices in life are growing slim.

Roleplaying Notes: Jherek is filled with insecurity that has plagued him as a child and a young man. Still, out of his normal politeness and manners, he remains friendly in conversation but also reserved in his participation. He won't speak unless he has something to say.

When it comes to the written word, Jherek has an advanced schooling and is familiar with most of the classics on warfare, philosophy, and religion. He's also well-read in most popular fiction about heroes and acts of derring-do.

In his dealings with women, Jherek's insecurities are most apparent. He finds women lovely and alien, and he acts very timid, unable to approach them even to talk. He is mannerly, and allows no disrespect to pass unchallenged. Despite his timidity, Jherek has a knack for drawing women to him. There's something about his innate naiveté and chivalry that makes most feel warm toward him. Unfortunately, that same knack challenges women who are turned toward the darker pursuits in life, and attempted seduction by those types of women is something he's had to deal with before. He believes in true love and does not let down his guard.

Jherek extends a friendly hand if approached and even gives those of Evil alignment a chance to prove themselves of worth. But if one of them steps over the line while Jherek is around, the young sailor steps in with a heavy foot.

Sabyna

6th-Level Human Wizard

Strength	10
Dexterity	15
Constitution	12
Intelligence	14
Wisdom	16
Charisma	13
AC	10
THAC0	16
Hit Points	21
Alignment	Chaotic Good
Special Attacks	Sabyna's familiar is a raggamoffyn that she carries in a *bag of holding*. Once she unleashes it, the raggamoffyn instantly does her bidding.
Special Defenses	*Detect magic* (60% chance).
Size	M (5'5")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Navigation (12), Ancient Languages (14), Reading/Writing (15), Carpentry (10), Seamanship (16), Herbalism (12)

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger and Whip. Sabyna depends on her magic and the ship's crew to keep her from harm. She has learned to use a whip to snare spars and rigging to climb up quickly. The whip is not often used as an offensive weapon, more as a tool. She's good with a knife, able to take silver pieces from many ships' crews in taverns at throwing contests.

Appearance: Sabyna is an attractive 23-year-old woman, vivacious and mischievous when given the opportunity. She keeps her copper-colored hair cut short. Her eyes are slightly lighter, a reddish brown. She has a full figure but keeps lean by working constantly on her ship. She dresses sensibly in breeches while aboard ship but likes to dress up when the occasion presents itself. Scattered freckles cross the bridge of her nose, standing out in spite of her heavy tan.

Magical Items: *Bag of holding.*

Background: Sabyna is the daughter of a ship's mage, Siann Truesail, and wouldn't live away from the sea. She has two older living brothers, one of them a ship's mage like her, and one of them a ranger in the Moonshae Isles. She had another brother, Dannin, who was killed by Falkane, Jherek's pirate father. She loves to cook in her cabin and entertain guests. She likes her food hot and spicy, and often tries new and exotic dishes she wouldn't cook just for herself because she's frugal. She's given her heart to *Breezerunner*, the ship on which she currently serves. She loves Jherek dearly but isn't sure where their two lives are going to lead them. Both are independent and pulled by forces larger than either of them.

Roleplaying Notes: Growing up on ships, Sabyna has developed social skills that always serve her in good stead. She's at home with people from all walks of life and has developed a skill at bartering that allows her some interesting sideline ventures. Working the seas of Faerûn, Sabyna has a network in place of ships' mages, ships' captains, sailors, and merchants that she can depend on for information, or for getting her hands on things that can often be hard to acquire. She is constantly fed gossip that may be true, half-true, or downright lies. She has a better than 50% chance of knowing which is what.

Currently, she's on *Breezerunner*, a cargo ship that regularly travels the Sword Coast. She has a major impact on the crew and what business they do, not quite on equal footing with Captain Tynnel, but able to have her say and know it's going to matter. She has a good sense of humor, a way about her of making anyone feel at ease, but can be determined about her own goals or what she perceives needs to be done. There have been a number of times she's taken part in her crew's festivities or practical jokes. Her shipmates would fight for her at a moment's notice.

Gamer's Guide

By Joe Pillsbury

PAPER MAYHEM

"The Informative PBM Magazine"

Paper Mayhem has been leading the way for over 14 years by informing people about PBM gaming. Articles, reviews, biographies, PBM game & company ratings and more fill each bimonthly issue.

So why delay and miss out on all the fun? Read Paper Mayhem and take advantage of PBM gaming.

US Subscriptions: Single issue $5.00
1 year $24.00 - 2 year $42.00

Send subscriptions to: PAPER MAYHEM
Dept DM, 306 W. Lafayette St.
Ottawa, IL 61350-2058

SEEKING OUT-OF-PRINT MODULES?

the hit pointe

http://www.hitpointe.com

Mail-Order Game Shoppe
Specializing in Used and Out-of-Print
D&D® and AD&D® game products

No computer? Write for current price list:

185 N Park Blvd Suite 331, Lake Orion MI 48362

Legends of the Lance™
Free Newsletter
The Legends of the Lance newsletter is a FREE quarterly publication about the Dragonlance® Saga. Inside you'll find interviews with your favorite authors, artists, and game designers, information about upcoming releases, and other fascinating items.
Your subscription to the Legends of the Lance newsletter opens the door for you to ask us your Dragonlance questions, submit articles for publication, get the latest news of the Fifth Age, and much more!
To receive your FREE subscription, mail or email your name and postal address to the following address or call the customer service number:
Wizards of the Coast
Customer Service Department
P.O. Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707
Email: legends@wizards.com
Customer Service: (206) 624-0933
Dragonlance® Saga
™ and ® designate trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. ©1998 TSR, Inc. All rights reserved. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Life-Shapes of Athas

On the world of Athas or in any AD&D® campaign, life-shaped items are a strange and dangerous form of magic.

THE DEFILER EVOKED HIS MYSTICAL SHIELD JUST IN TIME to deflect the shimmering bolts of energy. Thessa did not hesitate, rolling in directly behind her spell and slashing at his chest. Her eyes sparkled as she felt her enchanted dagger penetrate the barrier and cut a long gash in Miayrd's tunic and the flesh beneath.

"I am not the naive village girl you once knew, Defiler! You'll find that the Veiled Alliance has taught me well. With their teaching, I have grown in power."

Thessa's smile shriveled like the yolk of an erdlu at highsun as she caught a glimpse of what lay beneath Miayrd's ruined shirt. The gesture did not escape him as he tore the tunic off, revealing a grayish, bony girdle that looked for all the world as though he wore his ribs on the outside of his skin. He leapt at Thessa with blinding speed, catching her in the face with a lash that materialized out of thin air. Thessa cried out in surprise more than pain, stunned that the seemingly flimsy strip of material could raise such a bloody welt after a glancing blow.

Miayrd's chuckle reverberated through her bones. Thessa looked at him, down to the lash that was slithering back up his arm, and back to the defiler's face, her mind trying desperately to grasp the situation.

"You'll find, my love," whispered Miayrd, "that I've done some growing of my own."

Campaign Classics

by Christopher M. Schwartz

illustrated by Tom Baxa

Life-shaped items are a unique facet of the DARK SUN® campaign setting. These living tools, weapons, and artifacts were created during the Blue Age of Athas by an ancient race of nature-manipulating halflings known as the rhulisti. The rhulisti lived in such harmony with their environment that they shunned the use of all unliving materials. Having unlocked the secrets of building and altering life to suit their needs, they created a plethora of altered organisms designed to perform all sorts of tasks, both extraordinary and mundane.

Life-shapes are classified by type and use. Life-shape **creatures** are fully self-reliant organisms engineered to perform a specific task. **Tissues,** though organic in nature, are not whole organisms. They can perform only the function for which they were created and must have their other needs, namely maintenance and nutrition, tended by another. **Grafts** are shapes designed by the rhulisti to become a part of the host's body. **Tools**

operate either on their own or with guidance from a supervisor. **Producers** create valuable commodities, and **parasites,** the dreaded dark-shapes, prey upon those who attempt to use their seemingly beneficial services.

All of the items presented in this article were created by the rhulisti and operate as per the outline of rules given in the *Psionic Artifacts of Athas* accessory, although the information given in this article is sufficient to insert the life-shapes into any campaign. Due to the powerful bond these shapes develop with their hosts and masters, using the life-shapes becomes second-nature, and no class restrictions should be imposed.

Repellers

Creature/Graft: AC n/a, HD n/a

The mere existence of these microorganisms is a testament to the scope of power that the halflings of the Blue Age had over life. Frightened by reports of mantis warriors lurking far across the sea to the west of Tyr-Agi, the rhulisti Life-shapers, in a culture that was still peaceful at heart, devised the repellers as a nonviolent means of keeping the thri-kreen at bay.

Dormant repeller spores look like a powdery, grayish dust. To be activated, the spores must be moistened with a few drops of water. The resulting paste is spread over the neck and shoulders. Over the next 48 hours, the spores grow into a self-sustaining colony of organisms akin to algae. The affected portion of the host's skin takes on a slightly bluish hue. As the colony feeds off the nutrients contained in the sweat of the host, they excrete their waste in the form of a substance that insects find repulsive. All insects of no greater than animal Intelligence that come within 10 feet of an affected host must save vs. paralysis or seek to avoid the host, fleeing if pressed. Insectoids with higher than animal Intelligence treat the host with a –5 reaction penalty. If they are in the presence of repellers for more than a half-hour, nausea and sluggishness overtake the insects, causing them to make all saves and combat rolls at a –1 penalty.

In two weeks' time, the host's affected skin area dries and flakes off as the repellers become dormant once again. Those who know the ancient ways of the rhulisti can actually extract enough spores from the dead skin to apply another dose, but this process has likely been lost beneath the same sands that swallowed the halfling empire.

Mak-ebanrath

Creature/Tool: AC 3, HD 3

The danger of life-shapes mutating and becoming deadly parasites was very real to the rhulisti, so this creature—whose name means "Hunter of the Dark-Shapes"—was created. A mak-ebanrath has the form of a half-inch red worm with six legs and two pairs of sharp mandibles. When placed near an external parasite, the mak-ebanrath attacks the dark shape, hitting automatically and causing 1d4 points of damage per round. To reach an internal parasite, the mak-ebanrath must be placed near the point of entry for the dark shape. Here, it reopens the wound delicately, causing only 1 point of damage to the host. Once it reaches its destination, its attack has the same effect as on an external parasite.

Life-shaped parasites destroyed by the mak-ebanrath cause no damage during the removal process. Dark-shapes that cause harmful side effects after their removal have an 80% chance of leaving the victim without causing any side effects whatsoever.

Vitality Ray

Creature/Producer: AC 5, HD 1

This strange life-shape looks like a stingray, a lifeform long thought extinct on Athas. To be awakened from dormancy, the vitality ray must be soaked in water and left in at least an inch of it during the production process. If the creature is allowed to dry up at any time during this cycle, it returns to dormancy, and the process must be repeated.

After the vitality ray has been activated, a humanoid must place his or her hand on its circular body. The recipient's flesh is pierced by four sharp spines, and he suffers 1d2 points of damage. The spines then retract into the vitality ray, where the recipient's body chemistry is analyzed. After a few hours, the life-shape's body grows warm to the touch as it begins its production cycle.

At the end of a week, the vitality ray produces a small, soft, liquid-filled egg containing poison bane, a potent antitoxin tailor-made for the analyzed individual. When this egg is ingested, the antitoxin renders that person immune to all poison and disease for a period of 48 hours. Only magical venom and poisons may affect the recipient of the antitoxin, and he saves against those at +5. The antitoxin works only for the person who was analyzed. The ray may create only one poison bane dosage at a time, and it enters a revitalizing hibernation for two weeks after doing so.

The rhulisti created the vitality rays to protect hunters in search of venomous prey. Most likely, they had enough rays to produce a dosage for each member of the hunting party, but with the decline of their empire, much Life-shaper lore was lost. Vitality rays exist only in scarce numbers today.

Purifier Sponge

Creature/Tool: AC 9, HD ½

The Blue Age was a time when rainstorms visited the land frequently and the inhabitants of Athas didn't have to work hard to obtain enough fresh water. The purifier sponge wasn't created because of a pressing need for clean water but simply because the rhulisti believed in eliminating needless waste.

A purifier sponge looks similar to the regular variety of marine sponges, save that its pores are much smaller, giving it an amazing amount of surface area and the ability to filter a huge quantity of water at once. When the sponge is placed in contaminated water, it sops it up immediately. One fist-sized sponge can hold about one half-gallon of water at a time. After a few minutes, the sponge begins to contract by itself, holding the contaminants within its own body and excreting pure, crystal-clear water. The sponge processes and extracts its sustenance from the waste material it filters from the water. One sponge can filter about 15 gallons of water before needing to break down the contaminants, a process that takes a day or so. Sponges that filter extremely toxic water are about half as efficient and may no longer function after purifying a significant amount, having died from the toxicity.

Injector

Creature/Graft: AC 2, HD 2

Not all of the ancient life-shapes are without their sinister applications. The injector was originally intended to administer doses of medicine in the field, but its ease of concealment and rapid use make it an ideal tool for assassination, should the wrong person ever lay hands on one—or rather, should the wrong person ever get one in hand.

The injector looks like a small winged mosquito about the length of a finger. Its abdomen gradually thickens into a bulb with a circular aperture at the extreme end. The head tapers off into a sharp, narrow beak, slightly behind which are attached three delicate eyestalks.

When the injector is held in the palm of one's hand and the command is given, the life-shaped creature begins burrowing head-first into the host's palm, down into the wrist. The process is extremely painful, taking about three days to complete and causing a total of 1d6 points of damage to the host. The creature positions itself so that only the sphincterlike opening of its abdomen remains exposed.

The injector can, upon a muscular impulse from the host, protrude a sharp, hollow needle from the opening now located in the host's palm. The life-shape can absorb and expel liquids through this needle at will. The creature extends the needle into a dosage of some substance and slowly begins to draw it up. The injector is now prepared to administer via injection one dose of whatever substance was absorbed.

The host must make an attack roll to strike any unwilling creature with the injector. If successful, the creature is immediately aware of being struck by the injector's needle and is fully affected by whatever substance the life-shape was prepared to excrete. Obviously, when used for medicinal purposes, it is unlikely the recipient would be unwilling to have treatment administered, and in such cases no attack roll is necessary.

Serpent Lash

Tissue/Graft: AC 3, HD 1

Life-shaped weapons have the distinct advantage of being highly responsive to both wielder and target. Primarily created as a deterrent to potential threats more than as an offensive weapon, the serpent lash is attached by a series of tiny, mouthlike suckers to the back of the arm about two inches below the wrist. This thin, black, life-shaped tissue wraps its length about its owner's arm when not in use. In battle, the serpent lash unwraps itself, remaining attached to the arm but otherwise gripped like a normal lash. Although a meager three feet when not in use, the lash can stretch itself out to twice that length. Just before it senses that it will strike, the lash projects tiny barbs all about the attacking section, allowing it to rip through flesh and making the attack much more damaging and effective. A single attack causes 1d8 points of damage. In addition, the serpent lash moves on its own to compensate for a target's defensive movement as it is being used to attack, thereby giving its wielder a +2 bonus to hit and damage.

Pur-aish

Creature/Tool: AC 4, HD 3

Known as the "Calming Breeze Lizard," the pur-aish is almost indistinguishable from the many species of small Athasian reptiles save that it does not shy away from the presence of humanoids. It is quite friendly, in fact, accepting morsels of food and gentle scratches of affection.

When enough interaction takes place to give the pur-aish a sense of trust, it attempts to climb up to the shoulders of one of its new friends. Leaning in gently toward that individual's ear, the lizard begins to trill in a low, deep tone that is too soft for anyone but the lizard's perch to hear. The song is extremely calming and seems to travel throughout the body. In fact, such a profound state of relaxation occurs that rest under the influence of a pur-aish is twice as revitalizing as normal rest. Wizards may memorize spells as though each were one spell level lower for purposes of study time. Natural healing is enhanced as well, taking place at twice the normal rate. The pur-aish can trill for many hours, never tiring from pleasing its master.

The rhulisti banned the use of the pur-aish, however, once they realized that the song of these creatures is highly addictive. After three days of continual use, the benefits of experiencing the enhanced rest are only one-half better than normal rest. At the end of a week of use, the enhanced rest provides no benefits, and normal rest is only half as relaxing. At this point, the user feels relaxed enough to sleep or rest only when the lizard trills. After two weeks of continual use, the person is comforted only when the pur-aish trills and is sluggish and melancholy at all other times, suffering a –1 penalty on all saving throws and combat rolls. These symptoms are reversed only when affected individuals completely stop listening to the pur-aish's trilling, and they take an amount of time to recover equal to the duration of the addiction.

Swiftstep

Tissue/Graft: AC 4, HD 2

This strange graft looks like a bony, knobby rib cage and spine. The spine ends at the top and bottom in sharp, dagger-shaped bones. When the command word is spoken, the "ribs" open up wide enough to enclose a humanoid chest The sharpened ends of the spine dig into the host's own spinal column, attaching at the base of the neck and the small of the back. The attachment process is quite painful, inflicting 1d6 points of damage. Sized for halflings, the swiftstep implantation causes halfling-sized humanoids to remain immobilized for a day or two, while larger humanoids must endure a week of inactivity due to the excruciating pain of the graft adjusting to a larger body size.

Once the implant is in place and the command is given, the swiftstep controls and elevates the response of the nervous system, doubling the attack and movement rates of the host and granting the host a +2 bonus to Dexterity. In addition, the host gains a –3 initiative bonus. The swiftstep allows the host to maintain this blinding speed for 1d10 rounds at a time. This ability can be used once per day with no ill effects. Additional uses require a Constitution check be made at a penalty of –1 for each additional use. This check is made directly after the power is activated. A failure indicates a terrible strain on the host's body. He or she immediately suffers 1d10 points of damage, is unable to perform any strenuous activity such as combat or spellcasting, and, if unassisted, moves at only a quarter of his or her normal movement rate until the damage is healed.

Dark Mother

Creature/Parasite: AC 6, HD 3

The dark mother is a mutation of the mother lizard (detailed in *Psionic Artifacts of Athas*), a life-shaped organism that

cares for the rhulisti tissues by storing them inside her protective stomach. The dark mother actually draws sustenance from tissues given into her care and ruins them in the process.

Indistinguishable from any other mother lizard, the dark mother scoops up life-shaped tissues that are tossed near her and swallows them. Her body sends them to a special stomach that pulls the life out of the tissues by absorbing their essence. This process causes severe damage to the tissues. The creature regurgitates the ruined items on command but then scampers off before her temporary masters discover any wrongdoing. Roll percentile dice to determine the effect her life-leeching had on the life-shape:

1d100	Effect
01–20	Tissues function at half potency.
21–80	Tissues are completely ruined.
81–00	The tissues are so corrupted that they have become parasitic themselves. When used, the tissues cause 1d6 points of damage and continue to inflict 1 point of damage per day until removed. Removing a parasitic tissue injures the host, causing a further 1d6 points of damage.

Chris Schwartz, at the ripe old age of 21, has spent nearly two thirds of his life gaming and dreaming about becoming a writer. This is his first article and one of two in this issue.

Old Lord Memory
Thalagyrt

This prissy and pendantic mist dragon might not like being disturbed, but he knows where the loot is buried.

by
Ed Greenwood

illustrated by
Storn Cook

THIS VERY OLD MALE MIST DRAGON LAIRS IN A damp, dripping network of caverns on the shore of the Sea of Swords, north of Port Llast. He keeps to himself as much as possible, and many folk who dwell nearby don't even know he exists. His hobby is collecting and remembering lore valued by the intelligent races that dwell in the North, such as singular items of treasure and magical items. One must trade information to obtain the desired knowledge from him, and both generous offers of interesting lore and a persistent but pleasant manner are needed to overcome his distaste for being disturbed.

Thalagyrt long ago earned the nickname "Old Lord Memory" both for his prissy, pedantic character and his utter fearlessness. No threat is known to have moved him, and attacks—even by obviously formidable foes such as beholders and other dragons—always evoke gusty sighs of boredom and grumblings at being disturbed. No one, save perhaps Thalagyrt himself (and he isn't telling), remembers who coined this term, which is usually uttered by human sages, notably those of Waterdeep. These learned folk often send adventurers with unusual lore-queries to him, with a mixture of affection and exasperation, as a "court of last resort."

The mist dragon's character can best be described as doleful and grumpy, but those who often have dealings with him say that he can become a loyal friend to beings of all races and may well be a romantic at heart. His rare, unexpected, and sudden rescues of favorite friends can only be attributed to genuine caring and energetic magical spying from afar. Many of these are adventurers, which suggests that the dragon derives entertainment from his farscryings and chooses as favorites those who do the most interesting and exciting things.

The keys to Thalagyrt's character could be said to be his undying interest in other intelligent creatures and pleasure in witnessing and recording their deeds. He views all creatures with compassion and humor and probably

understands "human nature" better than most humans. He can outwit foes who try to dupe him (his intellect is prodigious), but he finds riddles and games intended to impress others tiresome, and he would never himself try to deceive anyone maliciously.

Old Lord Memory is a foe of adventurers, orcs, and other marauders who attempt to slay, despoil, and steal. He also despises aggressive dragons; he thinks dragonkind fell from mastery of Faerûn because of the arrogant, ruthless, and self-interested behavior of wyrms in the past. "They're all deservedly dead now," he observes with gloomy satisfaction, "not that their passing's improved anything."

Thalagyrt's Lair

The nameless caverns where Old Lord Memory dwells possess a variant *wardmist* laid down by a previous, unknown owner. This feature is the dragon's reason for choosing these cold, wet, coastal caverns as his home; he can control the wards to hide himself behind mists almost as solid as stone, change illumination and temperature in areas it encloaks, and so on. He's still learning some of its powers, so he keeps its secrets to himself as much as possible, but visitors to Thalagyrt's lair have witnessed the effects equivalent to *cloudkill, dancing lights, dispel magic, shadow monsters, solid fog, telekinesis* (of both "visiting" items and of a large spike-studded rectangle of metal bars that the mist dragon drops from above on especially energetic intruders), *wall of fog, wall of force*, and *wraithform* (affecting the dragon himself). The *wardmist* "scrambles" all mind-influencing magic, psionics, and spells from the school of Enchantment/Charm, negating their effects within the caverns—and thus protecting Thalagyrt from them. It also "fogs" many *wizard eye* and other magical farscrying attempts to spy into the lair from outside, though this property—for unknown reasons—is unreliable and intermittent. How this *wardmist* acquired so many powers is a mystery … and Old Lord Memory would like it to remain so.

Most of the lair consists of long, curving tunnels that Thalagyrt can barely fit

down without scraping the walls, but its landward reaches feature a large circle of natural caverns that contain food, monetary treasure, books, stone markers salvaged from lands lost to the sea, and even lore-tablets from elder realms. Several caves around the circle are connected to a central sleeping-cavern reportedly large enough for several dragons to move around in simultaneously. It holds a glowing sleeping-mound of soft, thick mosses studded with phosphorescent mushrooms.

Thalagyrt's Domain

Thalagyrt ignores the draconic concept of domains and avoids fighting any other wyrms he meets, whenever possible. "Just leave me alone" might well be his watchphrase. This means he's timid, but certainly not craven. If forced to fight, he can call, from afar by magic,

swift and powerful aid from the Chosen, the Heralds, Malchor Harpell, and others who value the lore he preserves.

A foolish upper prelate of Candlekeep, now dead, once offered a large reward for the capture and delivery of Thalagyrt, alive, into the keeping of the "Learned by the Sea." Many adventuring bands tried to earn the reward and were routed either by Thalagyrt or his powerful allies, until Dove Falconhand grew weary of these demands on her time and asked her sister The Simbul to pay a visit to Candlekeep to personally persuade Most Learned Archprelate Rheldryn Uoulimpurt to rescind his reward offer publicly and add the firm advice that calling on the mist dragon Thalagyrt with weapons and forceful intent was not only foolish but apt to be fatal. It's said that "Rheldryn was tearfully eager to comply."

The Deeds of Thalagyrt

The favorite foods of Old Lord Memory are buttered fried snails and the green, slimy, soft Chultan jungle tree slugs that reach eight feet or more in length, but he considers any slug or turtle to be a delicacy, even dragon turtles. Mist and shorewash algae are his staple dietary items, but they don't thrill him—as, indeed, very little does. Visitors have brought him sweets and liqueurs, and they report that he loves these but hates being "bribed with food." Attempts to do so could easily backfire on would-be lore-seekers seeking to ply the dragon with edibles.

Thalagyrt is said to have the constitution of a mountain: he can eat anything, even deadly poisons or mist-dragon flesh, without apparent revulsion or ill effects. It's likely that past exposures to several poisons have engendered in him a strong inner resistance, if not immunity. Thalagyrt eats prodigiously, but not often (perhaps twice a month), though he glides almost daily through the spray of waves crashing on the shore, deriving nutrients from them. He exists in a state of perpetual dampness and is not bothered by this in the least. He can and does drink seawater without ill effects, but he prefers to "drink" the mists.

Old Lord Memory spends most days watching and listening to events all over Faerûn—in particular, human and elven societies within the Sword Coast North. He never seems to forget anything, though his recall can be slow, and the lore he imparts to others is seldom extensive. He believes that, for most folk, "less in their heads is better."

Thalagyrt can employ spells of his own devising to "project" (as three-dimensional images) scenes that live in his memory—and his mind holds thousands upon thousands of memories. Some are surprisingly important or private moments to humans or demihumans. (Thalagyrt has made a career of collecting mind-images from dying folk and others who desire to share and preserve recollections of events.)

A visitor who persuades (usually by payment of large amounts of gold coins) Old Lord Memory to yield up a choice memory can, for example, see and hear the confrontation in the throne room in Suzail where the risen Azoun confronted the traitors who sought to murder him; an elven conversation in the green fastnesses of Evermeet; or a tender, murmuring love-meeting between the great mages Elminster and The Simbul, Witch-Queen of Aglarond. These are but a few examples of literally thousands of scenes, some of them crucial to an understanding of now-crumbling treaties and long-dead heroes, rulers, and villains.

What Thalagyrt does with those payments is hire agents to learn and report tiny, apparently insignificant things to fill in gaps in his knowledge. Wherever possible, he prefers to gain such lore from primary sources—that is, folk who were there or directly involved, not proxies or written records. Occasionally, Thalagyrt hires adventurers to rid himself of persistent attackers or bribe these attackers to go away and leave him to think and observe. He views bullies and fools with contempt, for he can't be blackmailed or successfully threatened. None know his earlier life; he's simply "always been there" in his dripping coastal caverns. He has never, to anyone's recollection, mated or consorted closely with other dragons.

Old Lord Memory has a shrewd grasp of human character, has studied human conspiracies, and has learned how to hire help to best winkle out human secrets. He knows such things as the identities of the current Lords of Waterdeep, which noble families of that city have had secret meetings with the Brotherhood of the Arcane or the Cult of the Dragon, and the fate of Gondegal the Lost King. His information is more accurate the older it is, and (always) runs out entirely about a year ago. Whether he reveals these or other things to casual or persistent visitors is another matter; Thalagyrt has his own code and makes his own judgments of those who seek him out. He may volunteer much, sell what is desired dearly, or give only cryptic hints or warnings—or act befuddled with age and yield nothing useful no matter what coercion is applied.

Thalagyrt's Magic

Old Lord Memory has access to almost all known human Wizards' spells of 1st- through 7th-level and a fair smattering of 8th- and 9th-level magics. Although spells of 3rd-level and above are beyond his personal mastery, he possesses many memories (gained, of course, from other beings) of the specifics of casting them, and of their effects.

Of the spells the dragon can use, three appear hereafter. One of Thalgyrt's 1st-level favorites is of particular interest. A rare magic believed to have descended from a Netherese apprentice's spell (another copy lies in a well-guarded and hidden tome in Candlekeep), the *gemfire* spell would prove very useful to many dragons, Saryndalaghlothtor (described in last month's issue) in particular.

Thalagyrt uses his *gemfire* spell on a false gemstone (a rock crystal as large as a man's head, facet-cut in the same manner as many valuable stones) that rests on a flimsy, mostly submerged stick spanning a pool of flammable oil which, when ignited, triggers an explosion that sprays in all directions; creatures within 15 feet are likely to suffer 1d6 points of damage from flaming oil splashes unless they save vs. spell. A successful save negates damage.

Gemfire

(Alteration)
Level: 1
Range: 20 yards
Components: V
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes all non-enchanted gems or rock crystals (such as quartz) within its range to explode. Each exploding gem deals 2d4 points of damage to all creatures within 10 feet. No saving throw is allowed, and creatures within range of multiple gems suffer cumulative damage; creatures actually bearing a gem suffer 1d4 + 4 points of damage rather than 2d4. The dust of these riven gems catches fire with a short-lived but intense heat, forcing a saving throw vs. magical fire on all items within 10 feet of the explosion.

Gems bearing any sort of magical dweomer (temporary or permanent) are not affected by this spell and need not save versus its fiery effects; they automatically survive the magic. Gems smaller than the length of a man's thumbnail deal only 1 point of blast damage and no appreciable fire damage; if these are found in clusters (such as in many pieces of jewelry), they should be considered as one or more "normal" gems for damage purposes.

A second level variant of this spell, *Gharradin's slow gemfire*, causes gems to explode two, three, or four rounds after the spell is cast (how long depends on the precise words of the incantation).

Mistclaw

(Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 30 yards
Components: V
Duration: 6 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell can be cast successfully only in the presence of visible mist, fog, or steam (of any origin). Although such substances don't actually become components of the spell, they seem necessary catalysts for the enchantment to form its effect: a shadowy, translucent duplicate of one of the caster's claws. This claw can move freely through solid objects (it can be made to lurk within a wall or door, for example, and strike "out of it") and acquires tangibility only as it strikes.

When the casting dragon's real claw makes a slash, grab, or other movement meant as an attack, the *mistclaw* duplicates it. The shadowy claw is weightless but of the same size as the corresponding real claw, striking with the same THAC0 for 1d4 + 4 points of damage (regardless of the size or species of its caster and the damage dealt by that dragon's real claws).

Harming the *mistclaw* doesn't hurt its caster, but destruction of the real claw that the *mistclaw* duplicates, or dealing the *mistclaw* 22 points or more of damage, causes it to dissipate harmlessly, ending the spell. *Mistclaws* suffer double damage from enchanted weapons or spell effects but suffer no harm from

even violent contact with floors, walls, and obstacles, whether or not the owner deliberately phases the *mistclaw* through such items.

A *mistclaw* has a flying movement rate of 14 (maneuverability class A) and is guided by the silent will of its caster, such control not precluding the use of other spells or draconic abilities. A *mistclaw* can never be used to deliver any other magic unleashed by its caster, and it doesn't exude any aura of awe or fear.

Humans who tried to cast this spell report that they could make it work only after assuming dragon form by means of other spells (actual draconic abilities were not necessary), that successful human versions of this spell were at least 4th level, and that all of them required some part of a dragon (usually a scale or talon) as a material component. The wizards Cardatha of Silverymoon and Baerdrunsun of Alaghôn are known to have independently demonstrated versions of the *mistclaw* spell at recent MageFairs.

Muritho's Randomscatter

(Abjuration, Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: The round of casting plus next round
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One being
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a scintillating chaos of random magical unleashings that

"washes" continuously over the body of the caster or recipient. The myriad looks very impressive but is, in fact, harmless to all who come into contact with it. It does not function (and is wasted) if cast on a being already protected by an active spell that forms a visible body aura or protective shield.

❖ A *randomscatter* reduces the damage of hostile magic by allowing the protected being a +2 bonus on all saving throws (only if the magic or magics being defended against normally allow a saving throw).

❖ The spell absorbs 2 points of damage per die from each magical attack directed at the spell recipient.

❖ This spell nullifies the first *magic missile* to strike at the protected recipient (that is, a single bolt of harmful magic; if a single "incoming" *magic missile* spell unleashes more than one bolt, the *randomscatter* negates only one of the bolts, although it lessens the damage done by all of the others as noted above). This feature of the spell works automatically and neither exhausts nor ends the spell.

A *randomscatter* prevents the being it protects from successfully unleashing any magic: castings, command words, and will-effect unleashings don't work, Magical item charges, material components, and memorized spells aren't "used up" or wasted; they simply don't function and can be used normally when the *randomscatter* is gone.

Although this spell is almost always used to protect the caster, its effects can be transferred to a willing or unconscious creature touched by the caster during casting. Touched beings who are mentally opposed to receive the *randomscatter* cause it to race all over the caster and dissipate without further effect. A *randomscatter* can't be "stolen" by touch; both its caster and the recipient must be willing for such a transfer to take place.

Muritho is a long-dead human mage of forgotten origin. Old Lord Memory uses this spell without modification—and therefore it is also usable without modification by humans who examine Thalagyrt's spell scrolls. There is also a 5th-level spell variant, *Muritho's spellshield*, that negates all *magic missiles*, lasts for 6 rounds, and requires as its material component a flame ignited by any means from combustibles (typically wood, bone, or charcoal) that bear some sort of dweomer.

Thalagyrt's Fate

Word of Old Lord Memory's existence and location is slowly spreading in Waterdeep. Nobles discuss him with fair accuracy at revels, while commoners hear rumors of "a dragon in a seashore cave who sees all things and remembers everything ... and so can reveal just who murdered so-and-so, or tell what became of vanished Uncle Auldo."

Waterdhavian noble houses have begun sending messengers (heavily laden with gold) to Thalagyrt's nameless lair. Almost all of them seek answers to family queries, such as "What became of the lost heir to the house, who wandered off some eighty years back? Did he have offspring—and if so, who and where are they?" or "Who really stabbed Lord Hrimm at the revel? An agent of his rival Lord Alandalar, or someone else—and if the latter, why?" or "Who stole Lady Jamarra's tiara, and where is it now?" The dragon finds them entertaining diversions and helps as best he can in return for payment. Although he cares little who learns such secrets, Thalagyrt finds the second or third identical query tiresome, and if he's already told the heirs of Lord Palschane the Lord's fate, he's quite likely to give less accurate or extensive answers to sages, agents of rival houses, or creditors. (Readers who find the names in these examples unfamiliar are advised that they are first names; surnames have been omitted on Elminster's advice to protect the privacy of the noble families involved. As the Old Mage commented, "This precaution cuts down on assassination attempts against overclever periodical columnists and editors, helping the hired daggers to meet the demands of their already-crowded schedules ... a thoughtful consideration, ye see, for all concerned.")

Thalagyrt is less welcoming to the adventurers and wizards who follow. He's uneasy about spreading magical information, and he has already rebuffed several overly demanding mages and Cult of the Dragon deputations. His worst disputes, however, have involved members of the Arcane Brotherhood of Luskan, and someday they might well bring about the mist dragon's doom by slaying or imprisoning him.

Thus far, Old Lord Memory has sent two ambitious Arcane underlings to their deaths by providing the whereabouts of archmages' tombs they desired to plunder—by neglecting to mention traps and lingering enchantments he knew to wait therein. A more formidable Brotherhood mage died in Thalagyrt's lair when he defied the dragon and opened a trapped chest. It released a "ravening force that incinerated him" (as farscrying Arcane wizards described it). This was actually a *wand of fire* triggered by a watchghost (an undead being described in *The Ruins of UnderMountain* boxed set) hiding in the chest.

In life, the watchghost was Norlatha Saundshauloe, a Lawful Neutral 7th-level Wizard. A human female of surpassing ugliness and tall, gaunt build, Norlatha was usually thought to be a man by most who met her. She dwelt in Baldur's Gate, where she made a living casting spells for hire: leakproofings, building constructions, rust and mold removals, and the like, not adventuring magics. She's now a firm friend of Thalagyrt and serves as his "butler"—the hands that (unseen by most visitors) set traps, move treasure, and otherwise see to the clealiness and maintenance of his lair. She remains insubstantial and as invisible as possible most of the time, existing only as a soft, sarcastic voice with whom Old Lord Memory bandies words. Most Brotherhood spies think the dragon is less than sane and talks to himself often, but a few have observed "the gloomy servant-man" and wondered as to her origins, nature, and identity.

Ed Greenwood lives beside a Great Lake and has a cottage on a much smaller one, but he's never seen a lady's arm holding Excalibur rise up out of either. If anyone knows the best viewing times, he'd be grateful to learn them.

Here there be *dragons...*

... and spells, magical items and monsters, character kits, weapons and powers, and proficiencies ...

DRAGON® Magazine expands the AD&D® universe each month with game articles you can use in your own campaign. Each issue also includes the latest game and book reviews, Sage Advice, interviews with your favorite authors and artists, and more!

Dragon® Magazine

Return this subscription form today—

You don't want to miss a single exciting month!

Fill out this form and mail it, with your payment, to the address below. *(Send U.S. funds only)*

Name_____

Address _____

City_____ State/Prov._____

Country_____ Zip/Postal Code_____

Method of Payment:

☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA

Credit Card Number_____

MC Bank No. _____ Expiration Date_____

Signature_____ Date _____

Mail this card with payment to:
DRAGON Magazine
Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
P.O. Box 469107
Escondido, CA 92046-9107
or Fax to: 425-204-5928

Dragon®

Subscribers in the U.S. and Canada will receive their first issues within 8 to 10 weeks.
All prices are subject to change without notice.

Save up to 46% off Newsstand price!

Subscription Type:

☐ New ☐ Renewal (enclose mailing label)

To U.S. addresses

☐ 1 year (12 issues) for $34.95
☐ 2 years (24 issues) for $63.95
☐ 3 years (36 issues) for $89.95

To Canadian addresses

☐ 1 year (12 issues) for $41.95
☐ 2 years (24 issues) for $75.95
☐ 3 years (36 issues) for $103.95

To foreign addresses

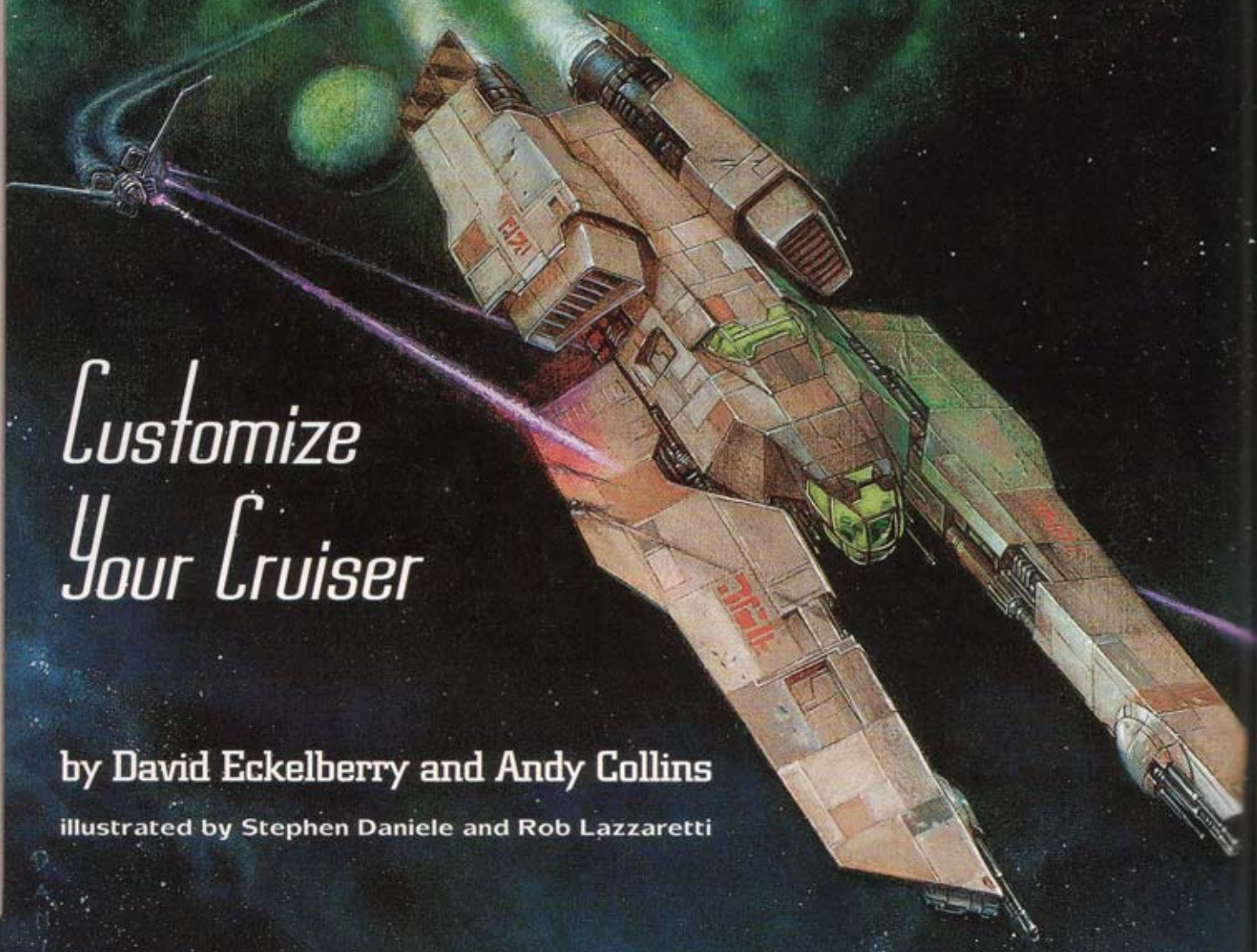
☐ 1 year (12 issues), surface mail, for $57.95

DRADM98

DRAGON is a registered trademark of TSR, Inc. © 1998 TSR, Inc. All rights reserved.

ARES™

Starship Perks & Flaws



Customize Your Cruiser

by David Eckelberry and Andy Collins

illustrated by Stephen Daniele and Rob Lazzaretti

STAR DRIVE™

© 2003 Ares Games

The ALTERNITY® game lets you play in any science-fiction setting you can imagine. One of the first things that comes to mind when most people think of science fiction are epic space operas—*Star Wars, Star Trek, Babylon 5,* and now the STAR*DRIVE™ setting. What is space opera without starships?

Here are new rules, options, and accessories for your ALTERNITY space vehicles, as well as three new starships. To use the material presented here, you'll need a copy of the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide;* Chapter 11 of that book presents the rules for constructing spaceships and running ship combat. While not required, the *Starships* accessory can also add diversity to the starships in your universe.

New Hull Types

The standard configurations of ship hulls—cutters, traders, etc.—form only the bare bones of what ship designers are likely to create. To begin designing your new vessel, you must first choose your hull. **Table 1** shows a selection of new hull types with odd numbers of compartments.

Once the hull is purchased, use the normal rules for purchasing and including systems and compartments.

Comp. indicates the number of compartments in the ship. *Durability* is the total number of durability points to be divided among the ship compartments to form their individual durability rating. *Cost* includes only the empty hull, without any compartments or systems. K stands for thousands of Concord Dollars, and M stands of millions of Concord Dollars. Gamemasters running non-STAR*DRIVE campaigns should substitute the appropriate currencies.

Alien Vessels

The rules for designing vessels in the ALTERNITY game are based around a humanocentric model. The crew of the vessel is assumed to function and behave much as the crew of a modern naval vessel. However, this might not be true for nonhuman vessels. Consider the following modifications when designing a vessel for an alien species:

▼ Allow a compartment to contain up to 15 or even 20 durability points. This should create the feel of an advanced, open-worked vessel with fewer individual compartments, bulkheads, or corridors. It might be appropriate for species that prefer wide open spaces or those to whom separation is distasteful. Conversely, you might allow additional compartments with fewer durability points each. For example, increase the number of individual compartments in a scout from 6 to 10, reducing the average number of durability points per compartment from 5 to 3.

▼ Allow for new compartment types. The current compartments, and the systems they contain, fit typical human engineering patterns, but they might not fit others. See **Table 2** for an example.

▼ Consider altered life-support systems and internal ship environments. An aquatic species that ascends into space won't be concerned as much about inertial effects but will be concerned about salinity, oxygenation, and temperature. A species that somehow evolved in space might have none of the concerns of terrestrial sentients.

▼ Vary the experience of different species through Progress Levels. One kind of system might have a higher or lower rate of development. For example, one species might have advanced antimatter control and containment while still mostly in PL 6, but they might never have developed other hallmarks of PL 7, such as advanced computer systems, AIs, or gravity technology.

Perks & Flaws

Much like player characters, each starship is a unique entity, with its own quirks, idiosyncrasies, and personality—not to mention the possibility of an onboard artificial intelligence. Not every spacefighter, trader, or scout has the same configuration; sometimes even vessels of the same model perform differently. In addition, every heroic group wants to feel that their vessel is special and distinct.

Table 1: New Hull Types

Civilian Hulls

Comp.	Durability	Cost
3	12	75K
5	20	150K
7	28	250K
9	36	400K
11	44	750K

Military Hulls

Comp.	Durability	Cost
3	15	200K
5	25	400K
7	35	800K
9	45	1.5 M
11	55	3 M

Some vessels exemplify smooth running elegance; others seem to be buckets of bolts barely holding together. The starship perks and flaws described below allow Gamemasters and heroes to add individuality to their starships.

Acquiring Perks & Flaws

Just how a ship gains its uniqueness varies wildly. Maybe it's a product of the design process, for good or ill. Maybe constant modification during the ship's operating life has produced some beneficial effect or some serious degradation. There are a few ways to determine these options.

First, the Gamemaster can simply assign a perk or a flaw through gameplay. Maybe after the heroes' Hasting scout is repaired by the bizarre Itican Syndicate, it gains the Advanced Intelligence perk. Perhaps after the ship is almost destroyed in the Battle of Klatu, it exhibits the Temperamental flaw.

Second, the Gamemaster can balance the purchase of perks and flaws using option points. Each of the perks and flaws described below lists the number of points that it costs (for a perk) or provides (for a flaw). Every starship is

Table 2: New Compartment Types Example

Type	Systems Types Allowed	Cost
Primary	Engine, power, weapon, command deck	200K
Secondary	Computer, communications, defense, drive, sensor, support	150K
Tertiary	Cargo, crew	25K

Table 3: Advanced Tech

System Type	Option Pts.
Power	6
Engine	6
Drive	8
Support	4
Sensors	4
Defenses	4
Communications	4
Computer*	4
Weapons	6

* The computer system may include an advanced AI that's not otherwise available yet.

assumed to start with 0 option points, so perk options must be balanced with flaws.

Finally, each of the perks and flaws described below lists a third cost option that you can use instead of option points. Sometimes this is simply a cost in dollars that must be added to the vessel's total cost, or it might involve a monetary value to add, indicating that the vessel can house fewer ship systems.

As is the case for heroic perks and flaws, you should consider limiting starships to three perks and three flaws.

Perks

When adding a perk to a starship, don't be afraid to abandon logic. For example, while it might make the most sense for a military hull to possess the Hardened Vessel perk, it might be just as entertaining if a freighter has acquired it. Explaining how a vessel has evolved can make for an interesting story.

Atmospheric Maneuverability

The streamlined shape of this vessel's hull facilitates operations in planetary atmospheres. Vehicle Operations skill checks in atmosphere receive a –2 step bonus. At the Gamemaster's option, this bonus may also apply when navigating within a gas giant, the outer corona of a star, or in a dense nebula.

A planetary thruster is still required for vessels using PL 6 engines.

Option Points: 2

Cost: The streamlining has the effect of reducing ship space, occupying 1 durability point of space. This durability point may be assigned to any compartment of the vessel.

Advanced Intelligence

The vessel's computer system has a state-of-the-art AI system. This AI can assist, much as a dedicated computer system, the actions and skill checks of the crew, or it can execute orders (firing weapons, navigating, targeting sensors, etc.) as commanded.

Rules for designing AIs appear in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dataware*.

Option Points: 6 at PL 6; 4 at PL 7; 2 at PL 8.

Cost: The advanced intelligence system is extremely expensive. Add $1 million to the ship's cost.

Advanced Technology

Whether the boon of an advanced alien civilization or a secret corporate research facilities, this starship contains technology that most people consider impossible. One system aboard the vessel is actually of a higher Progress Level than that of the campaign. For PL 8 vessels, consider adding something fantastic, like a matter transporter or a galactic FTL system.

Of course, this perk could be a flaw of its own, should knowledge of the vessel's uniqueness become well known.

Option Points: See **Table 3.** The number lists the option points it costs for the appropriate system type.

Cost: Advanced technological systems should be acquired only through a story episode or through careful GM decision, not through a cost multiple (which would be in the hundreds or even thousands).

Beautiful

Intentionally or not, the vessel's configuration, hull shape, and even its color detailing have produced a pleasing piece of art. While it has little effect (at best, a –1 bonus to initial skill checks in encounter situations), the vessel forever earns the praise of its viewers.

Option Points: 2

Cost: Multiply the cost of the vessel's hull (only) by ten.

Efficient Command Deck

The ship's command consoles, interfaces, and system stations function together in a synergy that exceeds their individual capabilities. As a result, teamwork between the crew is easier. Apply a –1 step bonus to any skill check used to assist another crewmember (including System Operation–*sensors*, Leadership, and Tactics).

Option Points: 4

Cost: The integrated systems on the deck take additional room. The command deck takes up 1 durability point (instead of 0 durability points).

Excellent Design

A medium- to large-size vessel can benefit from fine craftsmanship and ingenuity during its design process. For every 20 durability points of the vessel, it can squeeze 1 additional durability point of systems within its hull. The designer can select the compartments that possess the additional room.

This perk has no effect on the ship's or affected compartment's durability with respect to damage.

Option Points: 6

Cost: Double the cost of the vessel's hull, its compartments, and all of the systems in the affected compartments. Also, the construction time of this vessel should be doubled or extended. (See the *Starships* accessory.)

Exceptional Design

Even small craft can benefit from design and engineering breakthroughs. For every 10 durability points of the vessel, it can squeeze 1 additional durability point of systems within its hull. The designer can select the compartments that possess the additional room.

This perk has no effect on the ship's or affected compartment's durability with respect to damage.

Option Points: 10

Cost: Triple the cost of the vessel's hull, its compartments, and all of its systems. Triple the ship's total construction time.

Famous

Throughout the galaxy, this ship has become known as a bringer of good things. Whether a veteran of a successful war, the discoverer of a new paradise world, or an accomplished and profitable freighter, just riding in this vessel improves relations with others. When determining the initial reactions of the supporting cast members, apply a –2 step bonus to the heroes' Interaction skill check or Personality feat.

Option Points: 4

Cost: If this famous vessel is purchased, multiply its cost by 5. Otherwise, fame can only be achieved through story developments, real or manufactured.

Hardened Vessel

A vessel that's been hardened is more difficult to damage. Increase all of its armor ratings (LI, HI, and En) by 1 point.

Option Points: 4

Cost: Triple the purchase cost of the vessel's armor.

Hidden Compartment

A hidden compartment, limited to a maximum of 3 durability points and to vessels containing at least 4 compartments, is difficult to discover during an interior search. It behaves normally and is subject to attacks and damage like any compartment. It can also be scanned by advanced sensor systems from within or without. To physical inspection, however, the hidden compartment simply doesn't exist. It may contain anything—cargo, crew, a brig, or even an important ship system like a weapon or FTL system. To spot the compartment, an observer must make a successful Awareness–*perception* skill check at a +3 step penalty. During an intentional search, a successful Investigate–*search* check, with a +2 step penalty, is required to discover the compartment and the entrance to it.

Option Points: 2

Cost: Installing the hidden compartment without publication of the effort requires significant bribes to its designer, engineers, and the construction crew. Add $200,000 to the vessel's final cost.

Improved Durability

While it does not increase the number of systems a ship or its compartments can contain (indeed, it may reduce it), the improved durability perk adds one or more points to the vessel's total durability rating.

Option Points: Two per durability point, to a maximum of 5 points, costing 10 option points.

Cost: The hull model trades system space for durability. For every 2 durability points increased to the hull, subtract one durability point available for system space. A minimum of 2 durability points must be assigned, and a maximum of 6.

Lucky

Fortune can be kind, and she has shed her blessing over this vessel. Once during any scene, the crew of the vessel can take advantage of this luck by changing any result involving the ship or its systems by two grades of success. For example, a failed weapon check becomes a Good result, or a Critical Failure on a durability check becomes an Ordinary success.

Option Points: 4

Cost: Generally, this perk can be assigned only following a miraculous event or series of events during which, despite all the odds against it, the vessel manages to pull through victorious.

Military Shortfall

This vessel, though designed for a military purpose, has somehow found its way into civilian hands. As a result of its origin, however, it includes systems with a Military availability at no additional dollar cost. Restricted systems remain just as difficult to procure. (For rules on availability, see page 174 of the *Player's Handbook*.)

Option Points: 4

Cost: The vessel has a special defect that justifies its military sell-off. Most likely, its weapon systems have been deemed faulty or inaccurate (+1 step penalty to their use).

Popular Model

While there's some advantage in being unique, this perk offers the advantage of popularity. Since this model of ship has become so widespread, it has a certain anonymity. No one pays attention to the Atares freighters; they're everywhere, rendering them almost invisible. This perk also enjoys advantages in repairs; ports have a 50% better chance of having necessary repair parts. Since the components are likely familiar to repair crews, they receive a –1 step bonus on their Technical Science–*repair* skill checks.

Option Points: 2

Cost: Increase the total cost of the vessel by 10% to account for its popularity.

Protected Compartment

This compartment, often lying near the defended center of the ship, has been treated with an additional layer of armor and protective casing. This compartment's armor rating 3 points higher in all categories. Thus, if a vessel's armor rating is d6+1, increase its protection to d6+4 for the protected compartment.

Option Points: 4

Cost: The armor coating around this compartment causes difficulty in accessing its ship section. Only a single narrow crawlspace (1 meter diameter) can be used to gain entry to the compartment.

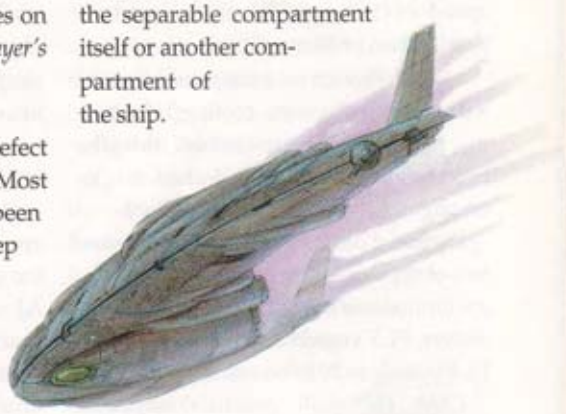
Separable Compartment

One compartment of this vessel has been designed to separate from the rest of the vessel's hull. It might contain cargo space, crew quarters, a weapon system, or even a self-destruct device.

To be habitable, the compartment must contain a power plant and a life support system.

Option Points: 2

Cost: The machinery to separate and rejoin the compartment costs 1 durability point, which can be from either the separable compartment itself or another compartment of the ship.

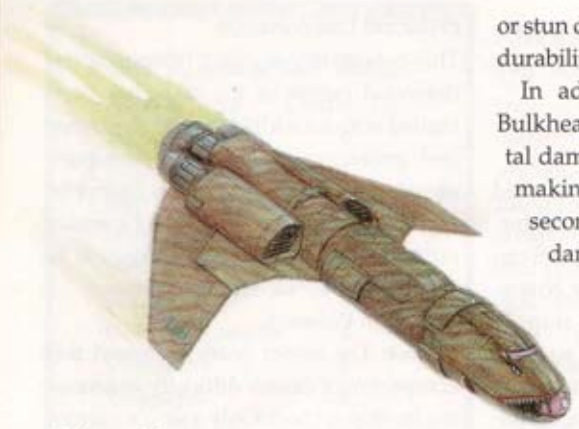


Separable Ship

The vessel demonstrates a fascinating capability to split itself into two separate, functioning ships. Both can perform all the functions of a normal starship. To acquire this perk, a vessel must be equipped with two independent command decks and two independent power, life support, and engine systems.

Option Points: 6

Cost: The machinery used to separate and rejoin the spacecraft costs 2 durability points, 1 of which must be in each of the ship divisions.



Submersible

While all starships must be able to withstand the pressure of keeping air within from escaping to vacuum, few have been designed to withstand water pressure, especially at extreme depths. The starship with this perk can navigate safely through water. To provide propulsion, however, a reactionless PL 7 engine system (such as the induction, inertial flux, or hypermagnetic engines) or a specialized propeller system (for PL 6 vessels) costing 1 durability point must be included. Generally, assume an underwater spaceship can gain a cruising speed of 80 kph (43 knots), maximum speed of 140 kph (75 knots), and an acceleration of 10 mpp.

Most designers take the trouble to add a sonar sensor system, costing 1 durability point, to the spaceship. See the description on page 129 and its ranges on page 133 of the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Option Points: 1 point per 2 kilometers of depth tolerance. PL 6 submersibles are limited to a maximum depth of 6 kilometers, PL 7 vessels to 12 kilometers, and PL 8 vessels to 20 kilometers.

Cost: The rigid structural supports aboard this vessel must always be powered by energized motor systems. When underwater, this machinery consumes 5 power factors. It also takes up 1 point of the ship's durability, which can be assigned to any compartment.

Tough Bulkheads

When it comes to resisting the effects of damage, some vessels fare better than others. A starship with this perk must suffer 1 additional point of stun or wound damage in its compartments before needing a durability check. For example, a compartment with 8 durability points must suffer 5 points of wound or stun damage (not 4) before requiring a durability check.

In addition, the ship with Tough Bulkheads can suffer one point of mortal damage to a compartment without making a durability check. The second mortal point has the standard effect.

Option Points: 4

Cost: The toughened bulkheads take 1 durability point, which can be assigned to any compartment.

Flaws

The most obvious way for a vessel to acquire a flaw is in battle. On the other hand, a design team that's rushed, underpaid, or simply incompetent can also contribute to the creation of flawed starships. Finally, a crew that fails to keep its vessel in good condition with quarterly service and diagnostics might discover a new flaw.

Erratic Intelligence

The good news is that there's an artificial intelligence aboard to help out the crew when it runs into trouble. The bad news? Well, the artificial intelligence is unreliable or downright insane. Maybe it's simply a flaw of its programming or interfaces that cause it to refuse to carry out an order (assume 1-in-6 chance). Or maybe the stress and loneliness of interstellar travel have driven the sentience aboard the ship into a madness in which the ship is perceived as its child, and the AI won't risk damaging the ship. The exact expression of the AI's madness is left to the Gamemaster to explore, but all forms of typical human mental disease are possible.

Option Points: 4

Cost: The AI is free.

Feeble Design

A feebly designed vessel is easy to spot; ship systems organized poorly and distributed haphazardly aboard the vessel result in serious inefficiency. For every 8 durability points of the vessel, it loses 1 durability point.

Option Points: 10

Cost: The vessel's hull and compartments cost only one-third their normal cost. (Another option by which this perk can be assigned is through an unfriendly relationship between purchaser and designer.)

Frail Hull

A vessel with a frail hull operates under significant disadvantage in combat. In effect, the spaceship has Good toughness (instead of the Amazing toughness of a normal starship), making it vulnerable to typical antivehicular weapons and even heavy personal firearms.

When fired upon by a standard spaceship weapon (of Amazing firepower), all Ordinary hits automatically inflict Good damage, and all Good hits inflict Amazing damage.

Option Points: 6

Cost: Thanks to the weak hull, the vessel can carry an additional 2 durability points worth of systems. These points do not count when assigning compartment durability.

Faulty Sections

A vessel with faulty sections is more likely to suffer problems under stress. The ship suffers a +2 penalty on all durability checks and has twice the normal chance of a Critical Failure (a result of a 19 or 20 on the control die).

Option Points: 4

Cost: The faulty sections have produced the unusual side effect of reducing the need for a constant flow of ship power. As a result, the ship's life support systems no longer require power factors to operate (although the complete deactivation or failure of the power plant will terminate life support systems as normal).

Legal

This vessel, unlike many of its contemporaries, has been designed to the letter of the law. All of its systems and registries have been logged with local and interstellar governments and agencies. As a result, the vessel includes no systems with an availability of Military or Restricted.

Since this vessel is squeaky clean and its capabilities are well known, government and military officials view the ship as especially nonthreatening and are more likely to grant passage and access to secured areas.

Option Points: 4

Cost: None.

Inadequate Design

Thanks to the efforts of an incompetent construction team, this vessel doesn't take full advantage of its capabilities. For every 15 durability points of the vessel, it loses 1 durability point. (This flaw can be chosen only for vessels of more than 15 durability points).

Option Points: 6

Cost: The vessel's hull and compartments cost only half of their normal cost.

Infamous

The name of this vessel has become a vile epithet in the mouths of spacefarers everywhere. Whether it was once a member of a vilified enemy armada or a servant of pirates, the ship can travel nowhere without encountering disparaging recognition.

When determining the initial reactions of the supporting cast members, apply a +2 step penalty to the heroes' Interaction skill check or Personality feat.

Option Points: 4

Cost: Someone wants to get rid of the ship, and maybe the heroes are among the few who don't know its reputation. To encourage a purchase, the seller has reduced the ship's total cost by half.

Primitive Systems

For one type of ship system, this vessel relies upon technology that's at least one Progress Level out of date. For example, the ship's engine systems may all be from PL 6 in a PL 7 setting. This flaw can be assigned only in campaigns of at least PL 7.

If a vessel is behind the technology curve on more than two system types, use the Primitive Vessel flaw instead.

Option Points: See **Table 4.** The number lists the option points provided by one PL; the number after the slash, if present, lists the number of points for being two PLs behind the tech curve.

Cost: The vessel is cheap to produce, as long as the necessary parts are still around. Halve the total cost of the systems that are purchased behind the tech curve.

Primitive Vessel

Running around with a Fusion Age (PL 6) vessel during the Gravity Age (PL 7) or even the Energy Age (PL 8) is a serious disadvantage. Whether it's a relic of a bygone age, a veteran fighter, or simply a reconstruction of the past, this vessel may be home to a number of perks to compensate.

Option Points: 6 for one PL, 10 for two PLs.

Cost: The vessel costs only half its listed price for hull, compartments, and systems.

Temperamental

Sometimes, this vessel suffers system failures (as described on page 162 of the *Gamemaster Guide* and in the *Starships* accessory) even though it has suffered no damage. Once per session, the Gamemaster can select a moment during which the vessel must make a durability check in a randomly determined compartment.

Option Points: 4

Cost: This perk could be assigned whenever serious repairs or redesign is done to the ship's computer systems. The ship might be outfitted with advanced systems for a reduced cost if the systems are known to have problems.

Ugly

Thankfully, appearance has no effect on the performance of a vessel in space. Nevertheless, this spaceship inspires reactions of contempt and disgust by anyone familiar with standards of spaceship construction.

The ship's homeliness is likely to inspire consistent disparagement by supporting cast members.

Option Points: 2

Cost: Ugly ships are cheap. Some players might not care what their vessel looks like and choose to acquire an Ugly vessel for a low cost. An otherwise normal ship could acquire the Ugly flaw through repeated damage and patchwork repairs.

Unlucky

Cursed by destiny, some vessels seem to constantly suffer system failures, misses, and damage. These vessels don't typically survive for long, and neither do their crews.

All skill checks by the ship's crew and durability checks by the ship suffer a +1 penalty. Any skill check made by enemy crews to affect the unlucky ship receive a –1 bonus.

Table 4: Primitive Systems

System Type	Option Pts.
Power	2/6
Engine	2/4
Drive	2
Support	2
Sensors	1/2
Defenses	1/2
Communications	1
Computer*	1/2
Weapons	2/4

* All dedicated computer systems may be available, but the PL 7 or PL 8 vessel will have no artificial intelligence.

Option Points: 10

Cost: This flaw should only be assigned as part of a story development, and even then the Gamemaster should consider keeping the assignment of the flaw a secret or compensating the heroes somehow.

Vulnerable

This vessel is prone to suffer system failure. Whenever a compartment suffers any stun or wound damage, immediately make a durability check for the compartment and its systems (as if it had suffered damage equal to half its durability rating.)

Option Points: 4

Cost: Most Vulnerable ships are produced through hasty construction. Building a Vulnerable ship takes only half the normal production time. Ships lucky enough to survive a collision or crash landing often develop the Vulnerable flaw.

David Eckelberry has been designing his own spaceship for years, composed of old RPG books and empty soda cans. Andy Collins just wishes someone would refer to him as "sir" without adding "you're causing a scene."

Quicksilver

Scout-class vessel | PL 7 | **Cost:** $5,965,000

Compartments: 6
Maneuver Rating: –1
Cruise Speed: 2 AU/hour
Dur: 24
Acc: 3 Mpp
Berthing: 6 crew

Armament: Mass cannon
Defenses: Jammer
Armor: Light neutronite (0 dur): d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6–1 (En)
Computer: Ordinary computer core, Ordinary dedicated science, navigation, and sensor computers
Engines: Induction engine
Power: Tachyonic colliders rated for 14 power factors
Drive: none
Hatches: Standard (0 dur)

Perks: Atmospheric maneuverability, Popular model
Flaws: Temperamental

Roll	Compartment	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
<3	Command	Command deck (0/0)	6/6/3
		EM detector (0/0)	
		IR detector (0/0)	
		Spectroanalyzer (1/1)	
		Mass detector (1/0)	
		Multiband radar (0/0)	
		Radio transceiver (0/1)	
		Jammer (0/1)	
		Airlock (0/0)	
		Reentry capsule (0/0)	
		Ordinary computer core (1/0)	
3–4	Engineering	Induction engine (6/6)	12/12/6
		Autosupport unit (0/2)	
5–7	Weapons	Mass cannon (2/3)	4/4/2
8–10	Auxiliary	Tachyonic collider (7/*)	14/14/7
11–14	Crew	Crew quarters (1/0)	6/6/3
		Lab section (2/0)	
15–20	Cargo	Dedicated hangar (3/0)	6/6/3
		Skycar (0/0)	

Weapon Data

System	Acc	Range (Mm)	Type	Damage	Actions
Mass cannon	0	5/10/15	LI (e)	d6+2s/d6+1w/d6+3w	3

Quicksilver

The *Quicksilver* is one of the popular Mercury-class scout vessels manufactured by Nguyen Shipyards. While her owners have made a few modifications to the basic craft, she's still similar enough to her sisters that any ship mechanic worth his salt can perform repairs on her with his eyes closed.

Typically, the *Quicksilver* piggybacks on a much larger craft when traveling between systems. Once dropped off, she is well designed for both interplanetary and atmospheric operations; her streamlined shape allows for excellent maneuverability in nonvacuum situations.

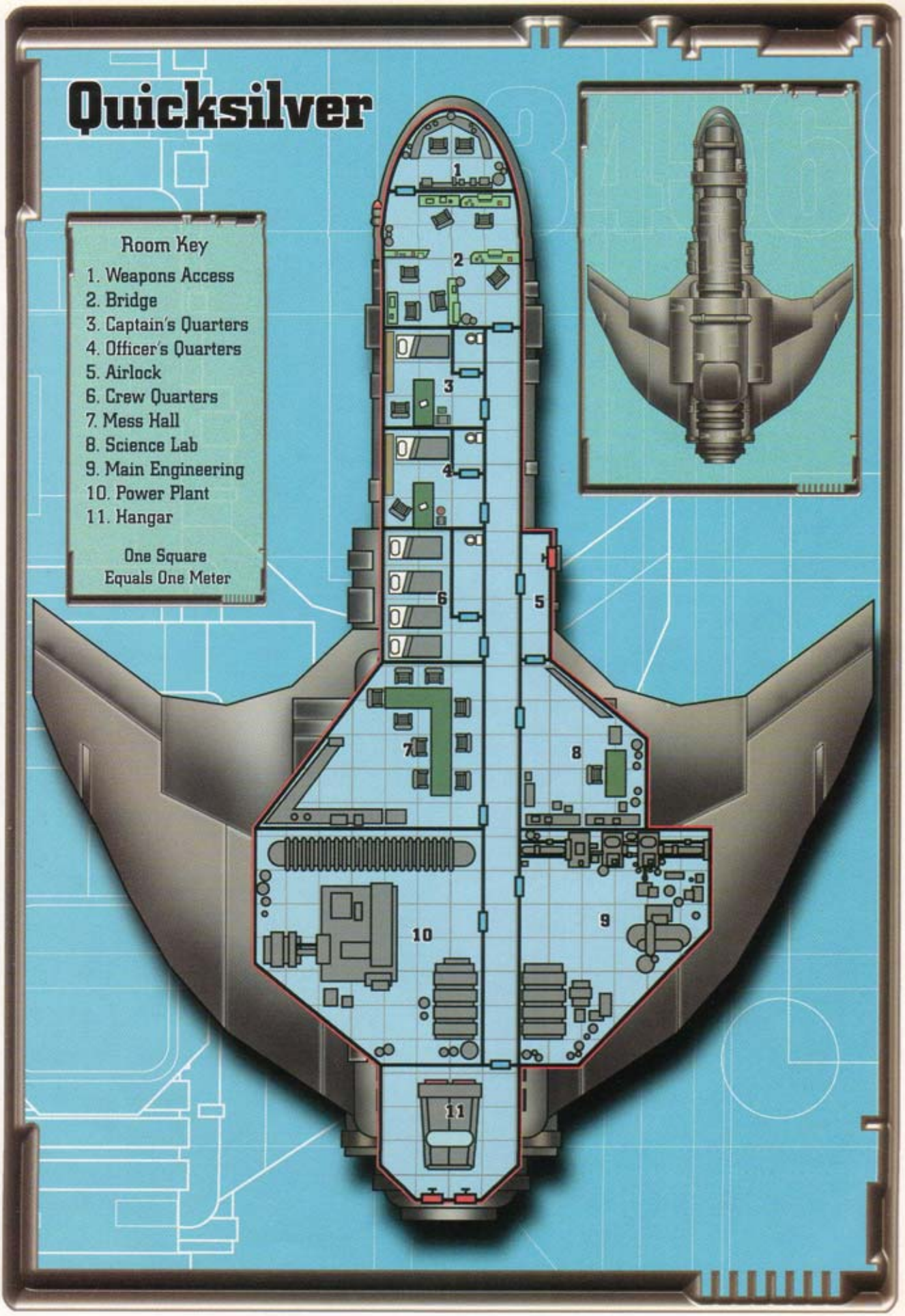
Normally designed to hold a variety of smaller craft in her cargo hold, the *Quicksilver's* former owners added a dedicated hangar. This allows a skycar—usable for short planetside hops—to fit comfortably therein.

The skycar, named the *Wingfoot*, seats two passengers comfortably and can hold up to 1 dur of cargo in its hold. It conforms to the description found in Chapter 12: Vehicles in the *Player's Handbook* in all other ways.

Because of their light weaponry (only a single mass cannon), most Mercury-class vessels rely on their maneuverability and acceleration to avoid conflicts. It is unusual for them to be used in systems where space combat is common.

Unfortunately, the *Quicksilver's* seen more action than is typical for such a craft. Repeated repairs and rebuilds have rendered the ship somewhat temperamental; from time to time, she just doesn't work as advertised. However, it's this flaw that gives the *Quicksilver* her personality. As former *Quicksilver* owner and captain Kyel Muray once boasted, "she may have a bit of a mind of her own at times, but you don't love 'em just for their bodies, y'know."

Quicksilver



Skykomish

Escort-class vessel | PL 7 | **Cost** $15,885,000

Compartments: 10
Maneuver Rating: 0
Cruise Speed: 1.5 AU/hour
Dur: 50
Acc: 2 Mpp
Berthing: 18 crew

Armament: Plasma cannons (2), launch tube w/10 PLA (plasma) missiles
Defenses: Deflection inducer, jammer
Armor: Medium neutronite (5 dur): d6+2 (LI), d6+2 (HI), d6+1 (En)
Computer: Good computer core, Good dedicated battle, navigation, sensor, and tactical computers
Engines: Induction engine
Power: Mass reactors rated for 30 power factors
Drive: 5 light-years per starfall
Hatches: Security (0 dur)

Perks: Hardened vessel (included in armor ratings above)

Roll	Compartment	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
(<–1)	Command	Command deck (0/0)	6/6/3
		Mass transceiver (1/1)	
		Radio transceiver (0/1)	
		Airlock (0/0)	
		Reentry capsule (0/0)	
		Good computer core (2/0)	
(–1)	Auxiliary	Mass reactor (4/*)	8/8/4
		Autosupport (0/6)	
0–1	Electronics	Mass detector (1/0)	2/2/1
		Multiband radar (0/0)	
		Radio transceiver (0/1)	
		EM detector (0/0)	
		IR detector (0/0)	
2–3	Engineering 1	Induction engine (4/4)	16/16/8
		Mass reactor (4/*)	
4–5	Engineering 2	Induction engine (4/4)	16/16/8
		Mass reactor (4/*)	
6–7	Engineering 3	Stardrive (3/0)	12/12/6
		Stabilizer (3/0)	
8–10	Weapons 1	Plasma cannon (3/3)	12/12/6
		Plasma cannon (3/3)	
		Weapons link (0/0)	
11–13	Weapons 2	Launch tube (3/1)	6/6/3
14–16	Weapons 3	Deflection inducer (3/6)	6/6/3
		Jammer (0/1)	
17–20	Crew	Crew quarters (3/0)	6/6/3

Weapon Data

System	Acc*	Range (Mm)	Type	Damage	Actions
Plasma cannon (2)	–2	4/8/16	En (e)	d6+2w/d8+2w/d6+1m	3
Launch tube	—	—	—	—	1
PLA missile (10)	–2	15/30/45	LI (*)	d6+2s/d6+2w/d4+1m	0

* Accuracy includes Good battle computer system

Skykomish

When contracted to design a top-of-the-line, mid-size combat vessel, Pearson Technologies came up with the Cavalier-class starship, of which the *Skykomish* is a typical example.

Though designed to function in battle as part of a larger fleet, the *Skykomish* is fully capable of holding her own until reinforcements arrive. In fact, she once held off a pair of corvettes while protecting a wounded freighter until backup moved in and drove off the attackers.

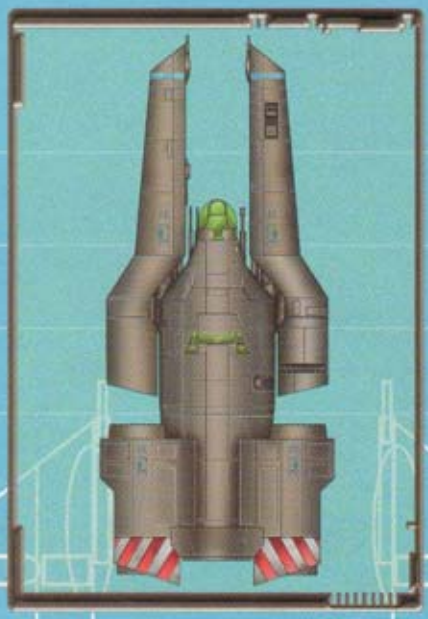
As with any military ship, the *Skykomish's* combat capabilities provide its main attraction. Her twin linked plasma cannons may fire simultaneously at a target with only a single System Operation–*weapons* skill check. At longer ranges, the plasma missiles provide a devastating punch.

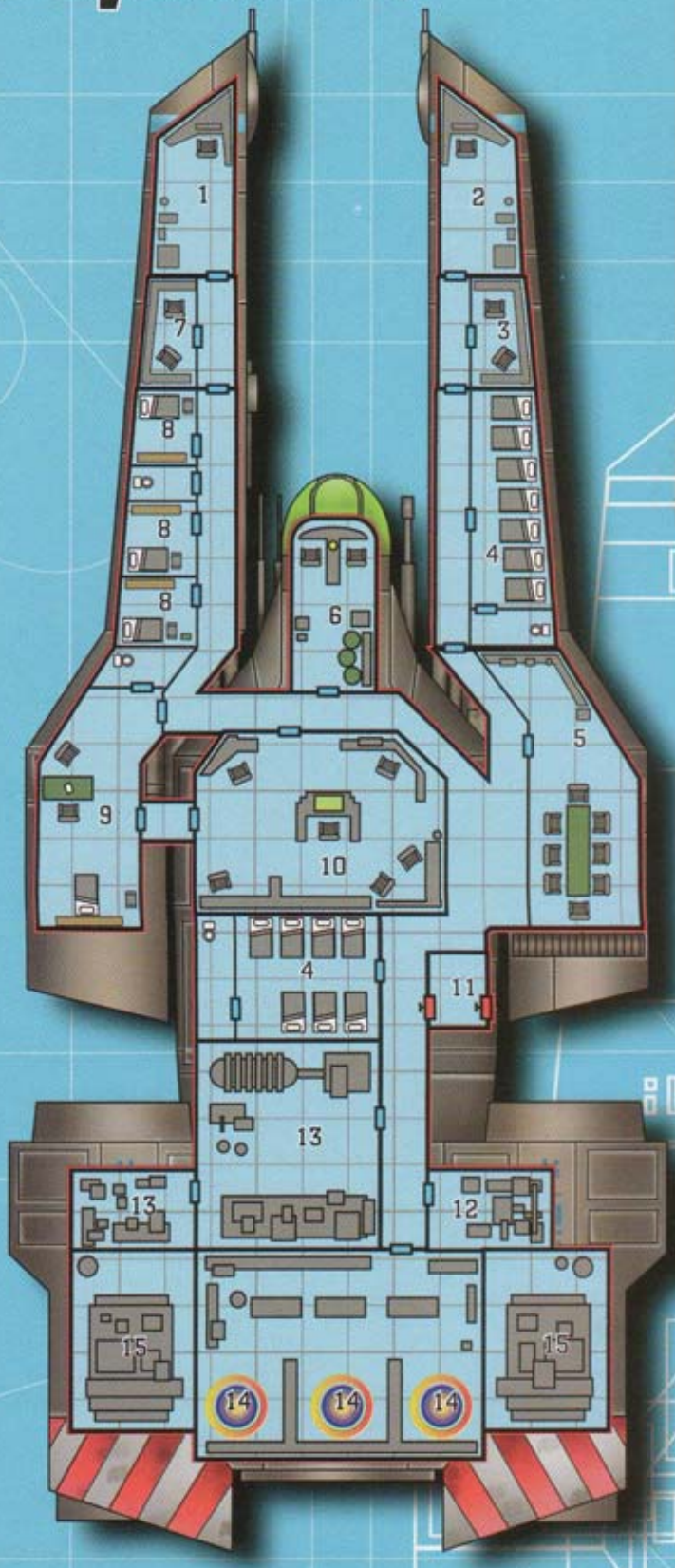
The high-quality computer systems, deflection inducer, and strong armor of the craft further add to her capability in space combat. In combat, her mass reactors provide plenty of juice for engines, weapons, and defenses, with a few power factors left over.

Unfortunately, the high cost of these improvements meant that only a few of the Cavalier-class ships were ever produced. In addition, the decision to place a number of critical sensor systems in one poorly-protected electronics compartment didn't sit well with some captains. Still, the sister ships of the *Skykomish* have found their way into use in a number of systems, where they're regarded as one of the tougher ships around.

The *Skykomish* is particularly suited for use in the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting. It's reasonable to assume that the Cavalier-class escorts saw some action in the Second Galactic War, and that a few of them (including the *Skykomish*) are still wandering about the Verge, whether in military hands or under the control of independent operators.

Skykomish





Room Key

1. Port Weapons Control
2. Starboard Weapons Control
3. Comm/Sensor Station
4. Crew Quarters
5. Mess Deck/Meeting Room
6. Missile Control
7. Defense Station
8. Officer's Quarters
9. Captain's Quarters
10. Bridge
11. Airlock
12. Life Support Station
13. Stardrive
14. Mass Reactor
15. Induction Engine

One Square Equals Two Meters

Starrunner

Corvette-class vessel | PL 8 | **Cost** $25,915,000

Compartments: 12
Maneuver Rating: 0
Cruise Speed: 1.5 AU/hour
Dur: 60
Acc: 4 Mpp
Berthing: 30 crew

Armament: Maser cannon, flux cannon, kinetic lance
Defenses: Ablative shield, jammer
Armor: Medium crystallis (6 dur): d6 (LI), d6+1 (HI), 2d4 (En)
Computer: Amazing computer core, Amazing dedicated battle, defense, navigation, sensor, and tactical computers
Backup Computer: Ordinary computer core, Ordinary dedicated battle, defense, and navigation computers
Engines: Gravitic redirectors
Power: Matter converters and dynamic mass reactor rated for 31 power factors
Drive: 5 light-years per spacefold
Hatches: Security (0 dur)

Perks: Efficient command deck, Military shortfall
Flaws: Infamous

Roll	Compartment	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
(<–3)	Command 1	Command deck (0/0)	8/8/4
		Foldsender (1/1)	
		Jammer (0/1)	
		Airlock (0/0)	
		Reentry capsule (0/0)	
		Amazing computer core (3/0)	
(–3)	Command 2	Command deck (1/0)	6/6/3
		Airlock (1/0)	
		Radio transceiver (0/1)	
		Ordinary computer core (1/0)	
(–1 to –2)	Auxiliary	Matter converter (4/*)	8/8/4
		Autosupport (0/3)	
0–1	Engineering 1	Matter converter (2/*)	10/10/5
		Gravitic redirector (3/2)	
2–3	Engineering 2	Matter converter (2/*)	10/10/5
		Gravitic redirector (3/2)	
4–5	Engineering 3	Spacefold drive (3/*)	8/8/4
		Dynamic mass reactor (1/*)	
6–7	Electronics	Multiphase radar (1/0)	8/8/4
		EM detector (0/0)	
		IR detector (0/0)	
		Mass detector (1/0)	
		Ablative shield (2/*)	
8–9	Weapons 1	Maser cannon (4/3)	12/12/6
		Raised turret (2/0)	
10–11	Weapons 2	Flux cannon (3/5)	14/14/7
		Raised turret (2/0)	
		Ablative shield (2/*)	
12–14	Weapons 3	Kinetic lance (2/1)	10/10/5
		Turret (1/0)	
		Ablative shield (2/*)	
15–17	Crew 1	Crew quarters (2/0)	8/8/4
		Sick bay (2/0)	
18–20	Crew 2	Crew quarters (3/0)	8/8/4
		Holofield bay (1/0)	

Weapon Data

System	Acc*	Range (Mm)	Type	Damage	Actions
Flux cannon	–4	5/15/30	En (e)	d6+4w/2d6+2w/3d6+2w	3
Maser cannon	–5	6/12/30	En (e)	d6+2w/d4+1m/d6+2m	4
Kinetic lance	–3	5/10/20	HI (e)	d4+1w/2d4w/d4+3m	3

* Accuracy includes Amazing battle computer and raised turrets.

Starrunner

In the future, humanity masters spacefolding: the technology of bending space in order to travel great distances in only seconds. The *Starrunner* exemplifies a ship that takes advantage of this technology.

The *Starrunner* is a fast-strike vessel, capable of leaping 5 light-years at a moment's notice, disabling enemy vessels or space stations, then escaping again before reinforcements can be summoned.

In the past, the *Starrunner* was used for its swift and brutal responses to enemies of its government. Since its liberation, the ship has changed hands a few times; however, its infamy has stuck with it. As a result, heroes piloting the *Starrunner* suffer a +2 step penalty to any Interaction skill checks or Personality feats.

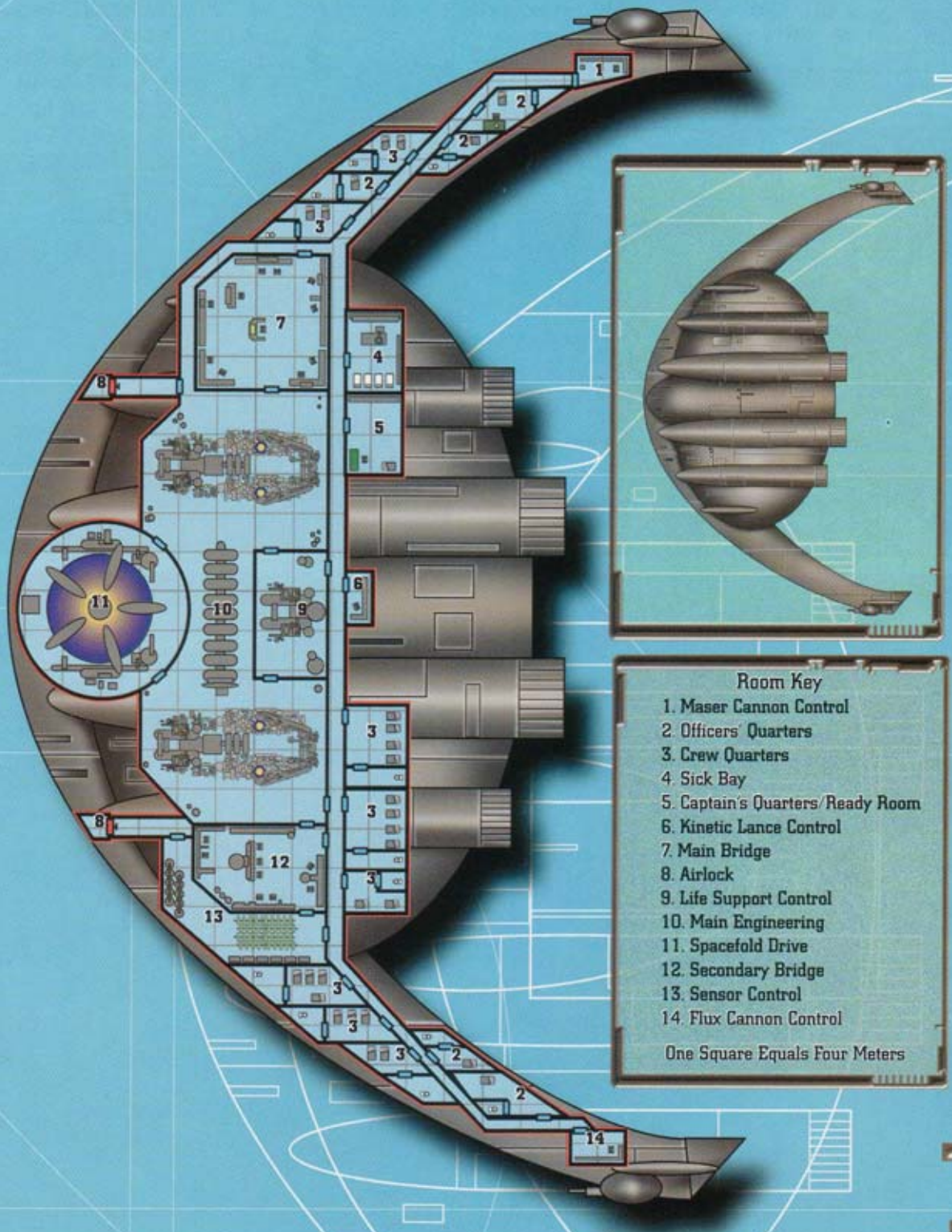
With its power plants supplying an astronomical 31 power factors, the *Starrunner* is ready for anything. Typically, the dynamic mass reactor is only used when spacefolding, providing that little push the ship needs to cross such vast distances of space. Without its help, the ship can manage spacefolds of only 2 light-years or less. When in combat, the matter converters provide up to 11 power factors to the ablative shield.

The *Starrunner's* flux cannon and maser cannon each enjoy the benefits of a raised turret: They may fire in five of the six arcs of fire (the maser cannon can't fire below the ship and the flux cannon can't fire above it) with a –1 step bonus to hit (included in the weapon data).

The *Starrunner's* crystallis armor completely regenerates all damage within a few minutes after combat ends. This allows the ship to perform multiple strikes without extensive armor repairs between battles.

The second command compartment serves as a backup to the primary command compartment. In the case of emergency, the entire ship can be operated from this second compartment. Unfortunately, this command deck doesn't enjoy the roominess and efficiency of the primary command deck.

Starrunner



Room Key

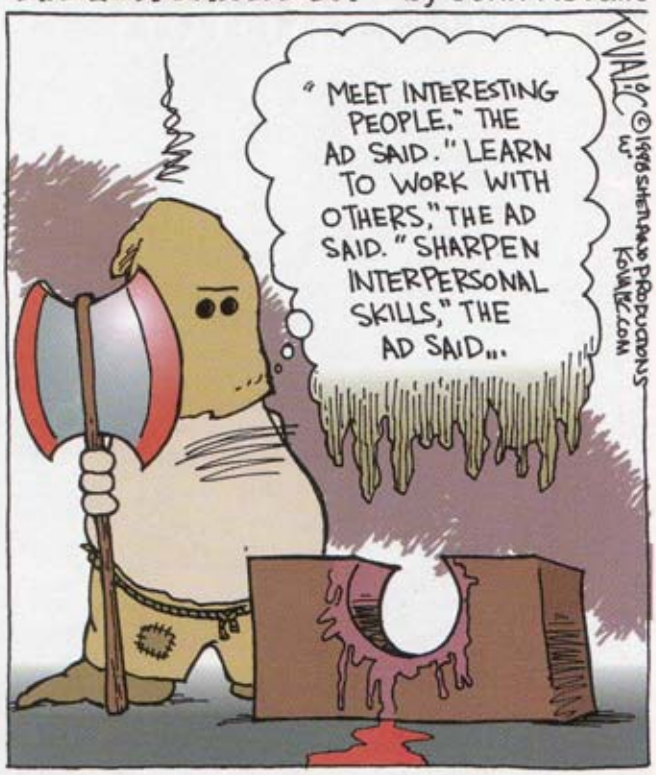
1. Maser Cannon Control
2. Officers' Quarters
3. Crew Quarters
4. Sick Bay
5. Captain's Quarters/Ready Room
6. Kinetic Lance Control
7. Main Bridge
8. Airlock
9. Life Support Control
10. Main Engineering
11. Spacefold Drive
12. Secondary Bridge
13. Sensor Control
14. Flux Cannon Control

One Square Equals Four Meters

Dragon Mirth™

By Peter Delgado, Jr.

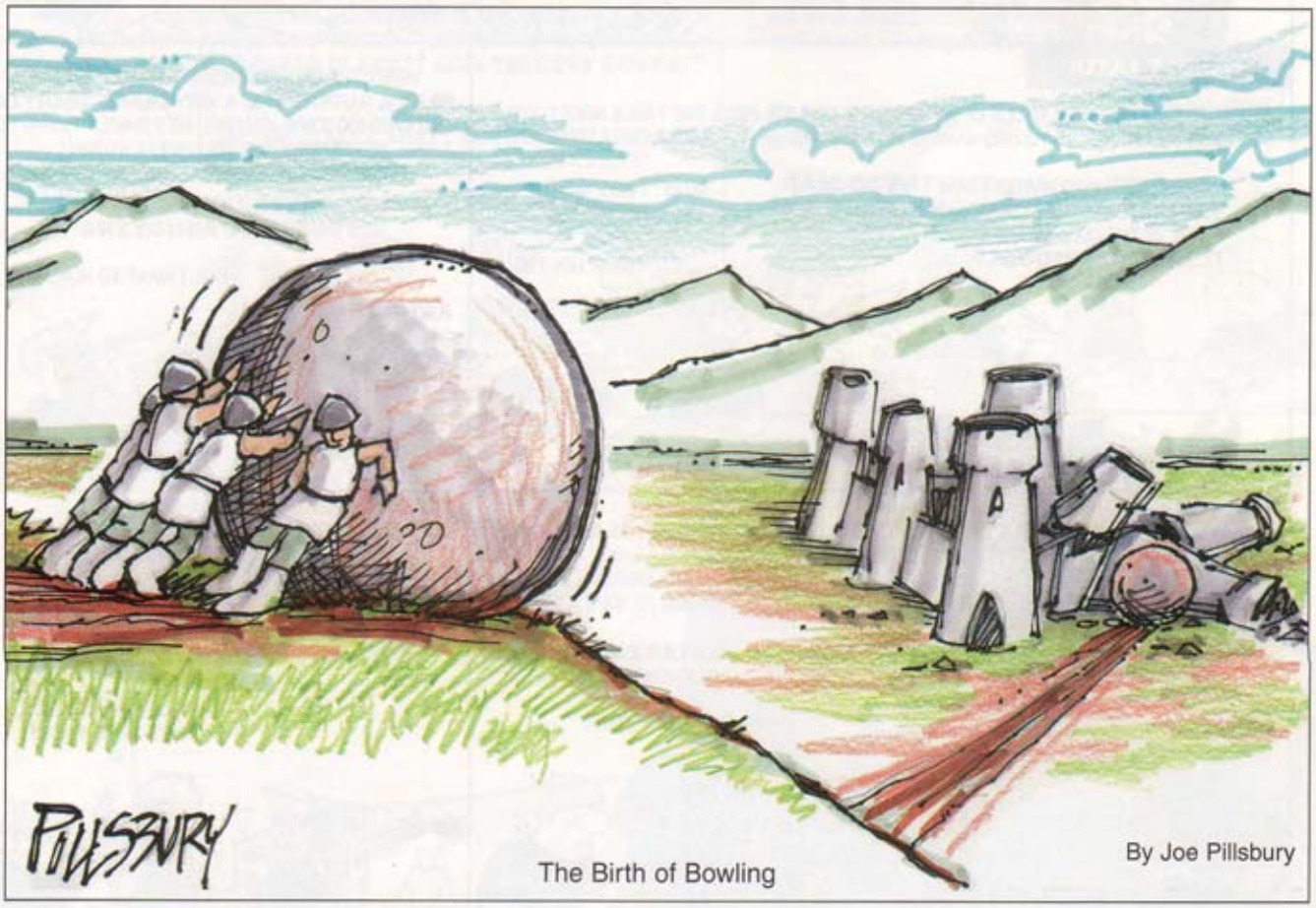
The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic


"MEET INTERESTING PEOPLE," THE AD SAID. "LEARN TO WORK WITH OTHERS," THE AD SAID. "SHARPEN INTERPERSONAL SKILLS," THE AD SAID...
KOVALIC ©1998 SHENANIGANS PRODUCTIONS LLC
KOVALIC.COM

"Thanks a lot! Now I need a new best friend, and I'll probably be spending the rest of my childhood in therapy!"

RADICAL RESTRUCTURING, INCOME SECONDS, ASSETS TRANSFERS, HIGH-LOW INDEXES, DEPRECIATION... I MISS THE OLD DAYS, WHEN IT WAS ALL JUST LOOT AN' PILLAGE!!
TOMASIC

By Richard Tomasic



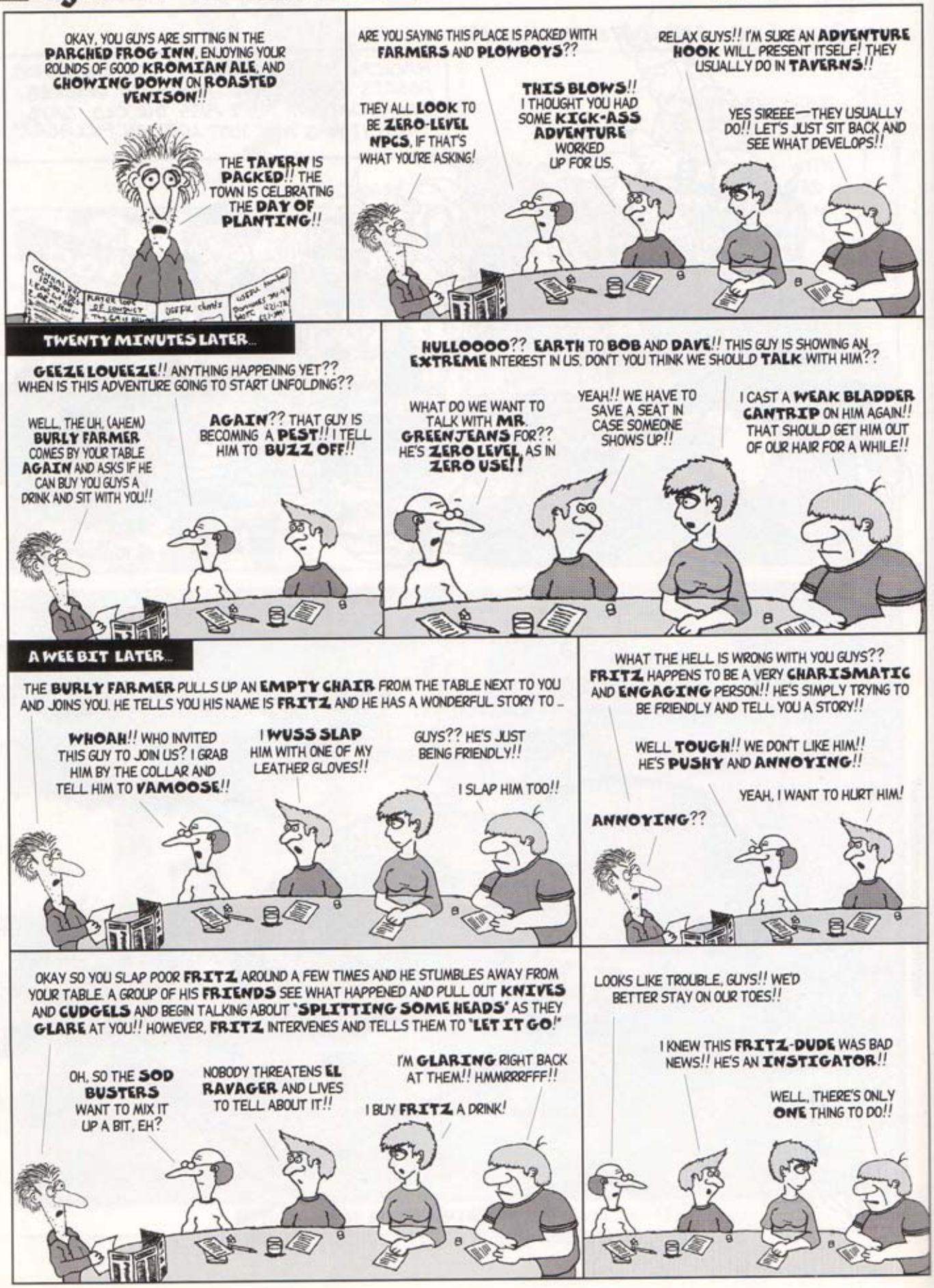
The Birth of Bowling

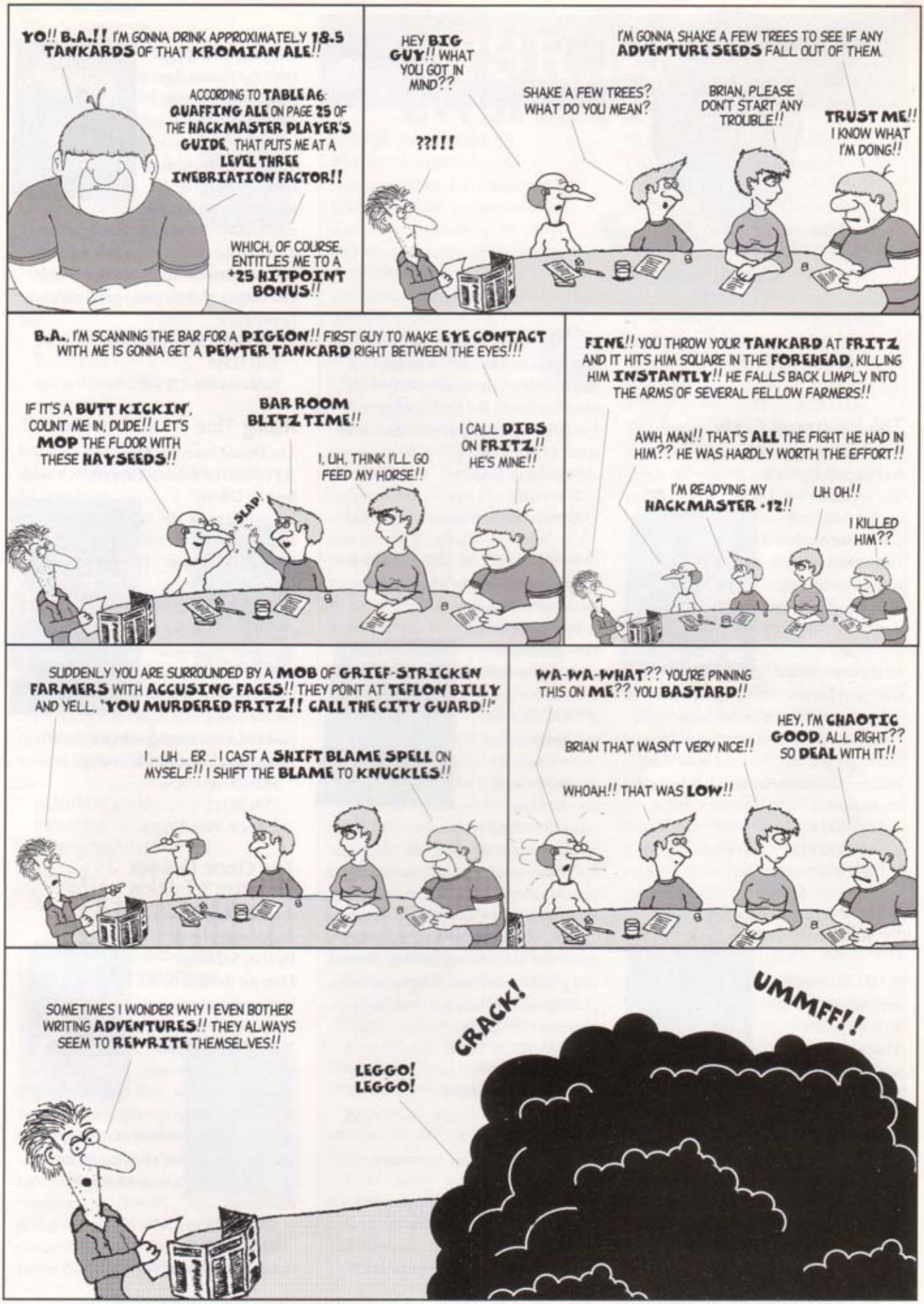
By Joe Pillsbury

http://members.aol.com/thinkloud/

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
STORY SUGGESTED BY WAYNE LIGON


OKAY, YOU GUYS ARE SITTING IN THE PARCHED FROG INN, ENJOYING YOUR ROUNDS OF GOOD KROMIAN ALE, AND CHOWING DOWN ON ROASTED VENISON!!
THE TAVERN IS PACKED!! THE TOWN IS CELBRATING THE DAY OF PLANTING!!
ARE YOU SAYING THIS PLACE IS PACKED WITH FARMERS AND PLOWBOYS??
THEY ALL LOOK TO BE ZERO-LEVEL NPCS, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE ASKING!
THIS BLOWS!! I THOUGHT YOU HAD SOME KICK-ASS ADVENTURE WORKED UP FOR US.
RELAX GUYS!! I'M SURE AN ADVENTURE HOOK WILL PRESENT ITSELF! THEY USUALLY DO IN TAVERNS!!
YES SIREEE—THEY USUALLY DO!! LET'S JUST SIT BACK AND SEE WHAT DEVELOPS!!
TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
GEEZE LOUEEZE!! ANYTHING HAPPENING YET?? WHEN IS THIS ADVENTURE GOING TO START UNFOLDING??
WELL, THE UH, (AHEM) BURLY FARMER COMES BY YOUR TABLE AGAIN AND ASKS IF HE CAN BUY YOU GUYS A DRINK AND SIT WITH YOU!!
AGAIN?? THAT GUY IS BECOMING A PEST!! I TELL HIM TO BUZZ OFF!!
HULLOOOO?? EARTH TO BOB AND DAVE!! THIS GUY IS SHOWING AN EXTREME INTEREST IN US. DON'T YOU THINK WE SHOULD TALK WITH HIM??
WHAT DO WE WANT TO TALK WITH MR. GREENJEANS FOR?? HE'S ZERO LEVEL AS IN ZERO USE!!
YEAH!! WE HAVE TO SAVE A SEAT IN CASE SOMEONE SHOWS UP!!
I CAST A WEAK BLADDER CANTRIP ON HIM AGAIN!! THAT SHOULD GET HIM OUT OF OUR HAIR FOR A WHILE!!
A WEE BIT LATER...
THE BURLY FARMER PULLS UP AN EMPTY CHAIR FROM THE TABLE NEXT TO YOU AND JOINS YOU. HE TELLS YOU HIS NAME IS FRITZ AND HE HAS A WONDERFUL STORY TO ...
WHOAH!! WHO INVITED THIS GUY TO JOIN US? I GRAB HIM BY THE COLLAR AND TELL HIM TO VAMOOSE!!
I WUSS SLAP HIM WITH ONE OF MY LEATHER GLOVES!!
GUYS?? HE'S JUST BEING FRIENDLY!!
I SLAP HIM TOO!!
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU GUYS?? FRITZ HAPPENS TO BE A VERY CHARISMATIC AND ENGAGING PERSON!! HE'S SIMPLY TRYING TO BE FRIENDLY AND TELL YOU A STORY!!
WELL TOUGH!! WE DON'T LIKE HIM!! HE'S PUSHY AND ANNOYING!!
YEAH, I WANT TO HURT HIM!
ANNOYING??
OKAY SO YOU SLAP POOR FRITZ AROUND A FEW TIMES AND HE STUMBLES AWAY FROM YOUR TABLE. A GROUP OF HIS FRIENDS SEE WHAT HAPPENED AND PULL OUT KNIVES AND CUDGELS AND BEGIN TALKING ABOUT "SPLITTING SOME HEADS" AS THEY GLARE AT YOU!! HOWEVER, FRITZ INTERVENES AND TELLS THEM TO "LET IT GO!"
OH, SO THE SOD BUSTERS WANT TO MIX IT UP A BIT, EH?
NOBODY THREATENS EL RAVAGER AND LIVES TO TELL ABOUT IT!!
I'M GLARING RIGHT BACK AT THEM!! HMMRRRFFF!!
I BUY FRITZ A DRINK!
LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE, GUYS!! WE'D BETTER STAY ON OUR TOES!!
I KNEW THIS FRITZ-DUDE WAS BAD NEWS!! HE'S AN INSTIGATOR!!
WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO!!


YO!! B.A.!! I'M GONNA DRINK APPROXIMATELY 18.5 TANKARDS OF THAT KROMIAN ALE!!
ACCORDING TO TABLE A6: QUAFFING ALE ON PAGE 25 OF THE HACKMASTER PLAYER'S GUIDE, THAT PUTS ME AT A LEVEL THREE INEBRIATION FACTOR!!
WHICH, OF COURSE, ENTITLES ME TO A +25 HITPOINT BONUS!!
HEY BIG GUY!! WHAT YOU GOT IN MIND??
??!!!
I'M GONNA SHAKE A FEW TREES TO SEE IF ANY ADVENTURE SEEDS FALL OUT OF THEM.
SHAKE A FEW TREES? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
BRIAN, PLEASE DON'T START ANY TROUBLE!!
TRUST ME!! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!!
B.A., I'M SCANNING THE BAR FOR A PIGEON!! FIRST GUY TO MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH ME IS GONNA GET A PEWTER TANKARD RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES!!!
IF IT'S A BUTT KICKIN', COUNT ME IN, DUDE!! LET'S MOP THE FLOOR WITH THESE HAYSEEDS!!
BAR ROOM BLITZ TIME!!
I, UH, THINK I'LL GO FEED MY HORSE!!
I CALL DIBS ON FRITZ!! HE'S MINE!!
SLAP!
FINE!! YOU THROW YOUR TANKARD AT FRITZ AND IT HITS HIM SQUARE IN THE FOREHEAD, KILLING HIM INSTANTLY!! HE FALLS BACK LIMPLY INTO THE ARMS OF SEVERAL FELLOW FARMERS!!
AWH MAN!! THAT'S ALL THE FIGHT HE HAD IN HIM?? HE WAS HARDLY WORTH THE EFFORT!!
I'M READYING MY HACKMASTER +12!!
UH OH!!
I KILLED HIM??
SUDDENLY YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY A MOB OF GRIEF-STRICKEN FARMERS WITH ACCUSING FACES!! THEY POINT AT TEFLON BILLY AND YELL, "YOU MURDERED FRITZ!! CALL THE CITY GUARD!!"
I ... UH ... ER ... I CAST A SHIFT BLAME SPELL ON MYSELF!! I SHIFT THE BLAME TO KNUCKLES!!
WA-WA-WHAT?? YOU'RE PINNING THIS ON ME?? YOU BASTARD!!
BRIAN THAT WASN'T VERY NICE!!
HEY, I'M CHAOTIC GOOD, ALL RIGHT?? SO DEAL WITH IT!!
WHOAH!! THAT WAS LOW!!
SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY I EVEN BOTHER WRITING ADVENTURES!! THEY ALWAYS SEEM TO REWRITE THEMSELVES!!
LEGGO! LEGGO!
CRACK!
UMMFF!!

KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ © KENZERCO 1998 • SEND STORY IDEAS TO JOLLYRB@AOL.COM OR KODT, 1003 MONROE PIKE, MARION IN 46953

Previews

JANUARY

The Shattered Circle

An AD&D® Game Adventure
By Bruce R. Cordell

The ancient circle of standing stones has existed untouched for centuries—until now. A strange force has destroyed part of the circle, breaking its ancient wards. Can your heroes solve the mystery of its destruction and determine what the wards held at bay before it's too late? Find out with this exciting adventure for low-level player characters.

$8.95/$12.95 CAN
TSR 11325
ISBN 0-7869-1325-8

D&D® Fast-Play Game: Wrath of the Minotaur

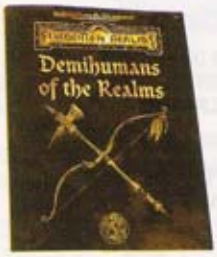
A D&D Starter Kit and Adventure
By Jeff Grubb

The perfect way to introduce new players to the D&D game, roleplaying, and the fine art of Dungeon Mastering. Includes the celebrated D&D Fast-Play Game, an extended step-by-step tutorial for new DMs by one of the top designers in the industry, and an exciting adventure that takes starting heroes into a terrible dungeon to face the wrath of its guardian—a dreaded minotaur! Use this as a stand-alone introduction or combine it with the forthcoming *Eye of the Wyvern* adventure for a more epic story.

$4.95/$6.95 CAN
TSR 11331
ISBN 0-7869-1331-2

Demihumans of the Realms

A FORGOTTEN REALMS® Accessory
By Roger E. Moore



In the tradition of *Warriors & Priests of the Realms* and *Wizards & Rogues of the Realms*, this volume presents more than three dozen kits for the demihuman races: elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. It features everything you need to create demihuman characters with a distinct Realmsian flavor. Each kit includes local culture and customs, historical influences and fashion, unique class abilities and proficiencies, social class, and role-playing notes to help you breathe life into every character.

$18.95/$27.95 CAN
TSR 11316
ISBN 0-7869-1316-9

Starships

An ALTERNITY® Game Accessory
By David Eckelberry

Starships provides both players and Gamemasters with a wealth of information on spaceship construction. It includes a list of new equipment for campaigns ranging from the Fusion Age (PL 6) to the Energy Age (PL 8), as well as more than sixteen different deck plans for ships ranging from one-man fighters to military corvettes. *Starships* also explores the properties of drivespace and alternate methods of FTL travel for campaigns, such as jump gates and hyperspace.

$18.95/$27.95 CAN
TSR 11319
ISBN 0-7869-1319-3

Rising Tide

The Threat from the Sea, Book 1
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Paperback Novel
By Mel Odom

In the first book of a sweeping new FORGOTTEN REALMS series, an evil warlord from the depths of the Trackless Sea rallies the undersea races of Toril in a surprise attack on the Sword Coast. This novel shares a setting with the *Sea of Fallen Stars* adventure boxed set.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21312
ISBN 0-7869-1312-6

The Cleric Quintet Collector's Edition

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Hardcover Novel
By R.A. Salvatore

Here for the first time in a single volume are the books by the *New York Times* bestselling author R.A. Salvatore that chronicle the adventures of the scholar-priest Cadderly of the Edificant Library. A collector's edition for fans of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting and R.A. Salvatore.

$24.99/$33.95 CAN
TSR 21313
ISBN 0-7869-1313-4

The Soulforge

A DRAGONLANCE® Paperback Novel
By Margaret Weis

A paperback reprint of the novel about the early years of Raistlin, one of the most popular characters of the DRAGONLANCE setting. The *New York Times* bestselling author Margaret Weis writes about her favorite character in this revealing and important tale.

$6.99/$8.95 CAN
TSR 21314
ISBN 0-7869-1314-2

The Silver Stair

Bridges of Time Series
A DRAGONLANCE Paperback Novel
By Jean Rabe

Amid the wreckage of the Chaos War, a new magic arises on the world of Krynn. To study it, Goldmoon, Hero of the Lance, founds the Citadel of Light in this novel by bestselling author Jean Rabe. Does this magic offer hope, or does it spell a new doom for the inhabitants of Krynn if it falls into the wrong hands?

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21315
ISBN 0-7869-1315-0

FEBRUARY

Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium, Volume One

An AD&D RAVENLOFT® Accessory

Collected for the first time, Dr. Rudolph van Richten's guides to the most terrifying creatures of the night—vampires, werebeasts, and golems! Add an element of horror to any fantasy adventure with the secrets and details revealed

TSR NEWS

Silver Anniversary Winners Announced

Last year, TSR polled the fans of the D&D and AD&D games to find out which adventures were the most popular of all time. The response was tremendous, with almost 5,000 different voters casting their ballots. The four winning adventures are:

Against the Giants
The Keep on the Borderlands
White Plume Mountain
Ravenloft

Expect to see these adventures coming out from TSR next year, either in the "Return to" format or in their original form. In addition, the response to some of the other classic adventures was strong, so we will most likely continue to release some of the other most popular classic adventures in the years to come. Thanks for all your interest, and be sure to help us celebrate the 25th Anniversary of TSR and the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game next year.

Giants in the Earth Winners

The results are in for our "Giants in the Earth" contest. The movie "Braveheart" was a popular theme, as were heroes from Greek mythology, but when the smoke cleared, one entry emerged victorious. The winner: Eric Morton of Annandale, Florida. Eric's entry presented the famous Dorian Gray from Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* A current subscriber, Eric's prize of a two-year subscription will supply him with *DRAGON® Magazine* well into the next century! Our runners-up:

John Polojac—Max, The King of the Wild Things, from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are.*

Robert Chaney—Nasreddin Hodja, an infamous Middle Eastern mythical figure.

Leon Chang—Orpheus, the famous Greek Bard.

Congratulations to these four, and to all who sent in their entries.

Traps Winner Published

Issue #247 of *DRAGON Magazine* included a Design-a-Trap contest for the GREYHAWK setting. The winning entry, designed by Johnathan M. Richards, was published as part of the *Crypt of Lyzandred the Mad* adventure (available in stores now). Check out future issues of *DRAGON Magazine* for more contests featuring TSR's campaign settings, and win prizes!

New DRAGONLANCE Storyline

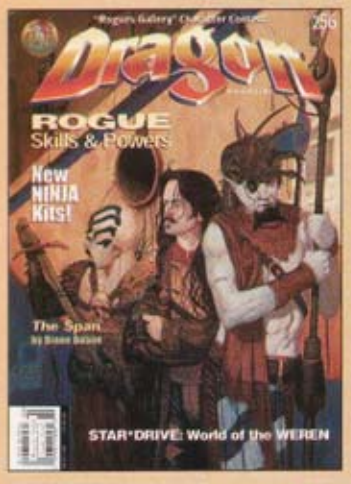
This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the DRAGONLANCE Saga, and TSR is celebrating with the launch of a brand-new epic storyline called the War of Souls. Authors Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman are already deep into the first novel of this forthcoming trilogy, their first collaboration since 1995's blockbuster *Dragons of Summer Flame.* Meanwhile, the editors and designers of DRAGONLANCE game products have integrated the storyline into upcoming releases.

The seeds of this storyline appear first in *The Sylvan Veil* by William W. Connors and Miranda Horner. This adventure sourcebook reveals the mysteries of the Silvanesti Shield and lets the Narrator and players learn the events that have occurred behind the shield over the last twenty years. *The Sylvan Veil* is available next month.

This and future adventures belong to Battle Lines, a series of books and adventures that tie in to the War of Souls novels without retelling their plots. DRAGONLANCE Brand Manager Sue Cook says, "Our goal is to create a wider tapestry of stories surrounding the landmark events of the War of Souls rather than tell the same series of events in several different ways."

The DRAGONLANCE team plans to hold a summit this winter to hatch new plans for next year. Until then, the DRAGONLANCE Vow of Silence binds the team to "remain publicly silent" on the details of the War of Souls.

Coming Attractions



Cover by rk post

Rogue Heroes

By Mark Hart

A treasure chest of Skills & Powers for Rogue heroes, including new abilities for Thieves and Bards.

Hidden Agendas

By Andy Miller

The cities of the Flanaess are alive with plots and subterfuge, and at the center of it all are the secret societies of the GREYHAWK® setting.

The Lost Giants of Krynn

By Richard Dakan

Earth giants, cave lords, desolation giants, and half-giants for your AD&D or SAGA® campaign.

World of the Weren

By Wolfgang Baur

Learn the Blood Philosophy of these hirsute warriors, with new weapons, creatures, and careers for the ALTERNITY game STAR*DRIVE™ setting.

Plus fiction by Diane Duane, "Bazaar of the Bizarre," "Knights of the Dinner Table," "SAGE ADVICE™," "DRAGONMIRTH™," "ProFiles," and more.

$4.95 U.S./$6.50 CAN
TSR Product No. 8225-02

herein. Updated and presented for use with any AD&D campaign, including the RAVENLOFT setting.

$24.95/$36.95 CAN
TSR 11447
ISBN 0-7869-1447-5

D&D Fast-Play Game: Eye of the Wyvern

A D&D Starter Kit and Adventure #2
By Jeff Grubb

Tips & tricks for running a wilderness adventure! Perfect for introducing new players to the D&D game, roleplaying, and Dungeon Mastering. Includes the D&D Fast-Play Game, an extended step-by-step tutorial for new DMs, and an exciting adventure that takes starting heroes into the uncharted wilderness to face the fury of a wyvern! Use this alone or combine it with *Wrath of the Minotaur* for a more epic story.

$4.95/$6.95 CAN
TSR 11373
ISBN 0-7869-1373-8

Dungeons of Despair

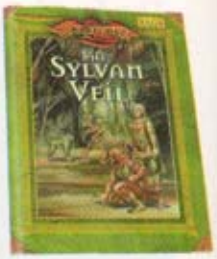
An AD&D Adventure Anthology
Edited by Christopher Perkins

Need a challenge for your player characters? Try these exciting scenarios drawn from the pages of *DUNGEON® Adventures*. Includes adventures from the earliest issues, updated and ready to play. Are your heroes brave enough to enter the deepest, darkest dungeons and the wildest wilderness settings anywhere? For player characters of 2nd to 4th level.

$12.95/$18.95 CAN
TSR 11444
ISBN 0-7869-1444-0

The Sylvan Veil

An AD&D and SAGA Supplement
William W. Connors and Miranda Horner



This epic adventure is rich with source material and drama revolving around the land of the elves. It includes history, lore, legendary heroes, and a quest beyond the magical Silvanesti Shield. Inspired by a story concept by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman.

$18.95/$27.95 CAN
TSR 11329
ISBN 0-7869-1132-9

Planet of Darkness

A STAR*DRIVE Adventure
By Christopher Perkins

Under a veil of darkness lies half of the planet Lison, cloaked in its own shadow. Below the surface, inhabitants continue to mine the precious metals that guarantee their livelihood. Heroes negotiating for supplies soon find themselves embroiled in the machinations of competing stellar nations, facing off against treacherous black marketeers, and dodging the threat of pirates and cykoteks. The adventure culminates with a discovery that could change the balance of power in the Oberon system forever.

$13.95/$20.95 CAN
TSR 11328
ISBN 0-7869-1328-2

Star of Cursrah

Lost Empires Series
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Paperback Novel
By Clayton Emery

Adventurers stumble across a buried city guarded by a powerful undead force. Secrets, thrills, and daring heroics punctuate this story that shares the setting of the game product *Empires of the Shining Sea.*

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21322
ISBN 0-7869-1322-3

The Puppet King

Chaos War Series
A DRAGONLANCE Paperback Novel
By Douglas Niles
As war and destruction spread across Ansalon, the elven ruler Gilthas must make a fateful choice, one that could spell victory or disaster for his people. His story is chronicled by one of the DRAGONLANCE setting's most well-known and respected authors.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21324
ISBN 0-7869-1324-X

MARCH

The Scarlet Brotherhood

An AD&D Game GREYHAWK Accessory
By Sean Reynolds
The shadowy villains of the World of GREYHAWK take center stage in this must-have sourcebook. Once they worked in hiding, manipulating the fate of the land from the shadows through assassination and espionage. Now the Scarlet Brotherhood emerges to spread fear and terror. This product also features the return of the Monk and Assassin character classes.

$17.95/$26.95 CAN
TSR 11374
ISBN 0-7869-1374-6

RPGA® TSR Jam 1999

An AD&D Adventure Anthology
Edited by John Rateliff
This product compiles the best of the Adventurer's Guild™ retail demo adventures from 1998. Each adventure provides a taste of a different game system and setting, from the popular AD&D game to the new ALTERNITY science fiction game. It features the FORGOTTEN REALMS, DRAGONLANCE, GREYHAWK, PLANESCAPE®, and RAVENLOFT campaigns.

$12.95/$18.95 CAN
TSR 11445
ISBN 0-7869-1445-9

Storm at Eldala

The Harbinger Trilogy, Book 2
A STAR*DRIVE Novel,
By Diane Duane
The *New York Times* best-selling author Diane Duane continues the story begun in *Starrise at Corrivale*. As Gabriel Connor and his companion Enda scratch out a living among the dangerous stars of The Verge, they stumble upon an astonishing revelation from the depths of time.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21334
ISBN 0-7869-1334-7

FANTASTIC FOUR™ Roster Book

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Accessory
by Richard Dakan and Jack Emmert
The heroes of the World's Greatest Comics Magazine come to life! The roster book features descriptions for more than 100 friends and foes of the FANTASTIC FOUR, from the Mole Man to Galactus. This guide for fans of Marvel Comics and the FANTASTIC FOUR offers up-to-date facts on Marvel's hottest heroes, villains, and story lines. Uses the SAGA game system.

$18.95/$27.95 CAN
TSR 11320
ISBN 0-7869-1132-0

The Rose and the Skull

Bridges of Time Series
A DRAGONLANCE Paperback Novel
By Jeff Crook
Weakened, their numbers shattered by the destructive Chaos War, the Knights of Solamnia look to the Knights of Takhisis. The alliance forged during the last days of the Chaos War is renewed, but when the grandmaster of the Knights of

Coming Attractions

Cover by Tony DiTerlizzi

Deep Trouble in Telthin

By John A. Hartshorne
A feud between a water elementalist and a marid caliph spills over into the Prime Material Plane. An AD&D adventure for levels 10–12.

No Stone Unturned

By Peter C. Spahn
Who's conducting an archaeological excavation beneath the city of Jevid, and what are they searching for? An AD&D adventure for levels 3–5.

Mistress on the Mere

By Paul Culotta
Fearless vampire hunters are needed in the fourth adventure of the Mere of Dead Men series. An AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for levels 5–7.

Under a Pale Moon

By Jason Carl
The Moon Steps are a place of wonder and magic—and danger. A DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE® dramatic supplement and AD&D adventure for levels 2–4.

AND MORE ...

$4.95 U.S./$6.50 CAN
TSR Product No. 8207–09

What's This Marvel Card?

You, lucky reader, have been selected to receive a MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game promo card! The action-packed new Marvel roleplaying game features a deck of 96 Fate Cards, but there are four extremely rare cards that you can't find in the Marvel box. The promotional Fate Cards—Deadpool, Ghost Rider, the Impossible Man, and Lockheed the Dragon—can be inserted into your Marvel decks, using their all-new events for extra slam-bang action! Now that you've got one of the promo cards, look for the game in your local comic or game store, and all your Marvel-fanatic friends will be Hulk-green with envy!

Solamnia dies, the very existence of the Solamnic Knights is challenged.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21336
ISBN 0-7869-1336-3

Outbound: An Explorer's Guide

A STAR*DRIVE Accessory
By Ed Stark

Outbound contains full descriptions of new systems and planets to add to any STAR*DRIVE campaign. Each system description includes adventure material that should draw curious heroes to the new, alien worlds, and the Explorer's Guide section expands on the existing rules for cataloging and exploring new territory.

$18.95/$27.95 CAN
TSR 11339
ISBN 0-7869-1339-8

Evermeet: Island of the Elves

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Paperback Novel
By Elaine Cunningham

A paperback reprint of the saga of Faerûn's elves, from their beginnings in the dawn of time to their hour of greatest need. When Evermeet, the elven homeland, comes under devastating attack, Queen Amlaruil's sacrifice holds the last hope of safety.

$6.99/$8.95 CAN
TSR 21354
ISBN 0-7869-1354-1

Spectre of the Black Rose

A RAVENLOFT Paperback Novel
By James Lowder

In this chilling sequel to the best-selling *Knight of the Black Rose*, Lord Soth, an important character in both the DRAGONLANCE and RAVENLOFT settings, fights to keep his reign of terror from crumbling.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21333
ISBN 0-7869-1333-9

DRAGON Magazine Archive

An AD&D Electronic Media Utility
Programming by
Saltmine Creative, Inc.

This CD-ROM contains the complete run of *DRAGON® Magazine*, from issue #1 to #250. Each issue is presented exactly as originally printed—ads, covers, and all. In PDF format, everything is easy to use and completely searchable. Includes every issue of *The Strategic Review*, *DRAGON Magazine's* predecessor.

Price: TBD
TSR 11448
ISBN 0-7869-1148-3

The Accursed Tower

An AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventure
By R.A. Salvatore

Go north to Icewind Dale, home of the famous drow Ranger Drizzt Do'Urden, for an action-packed adventure for low-level heroes. Most thought the Accursed Tower was destroyed. All knew it had been lost long ago. Now a small group of heroes must venture into its long-hidden ruins to discover what treasures and dangers await them in the frozen north.

$9.95/$14.95 CAN
TSR 11337
ISBN 0-7869-1337-1

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

Title of Publication: *DRAGON Magazine*
Publication Number: ISSN 0279-6848
Date of Filing: 11/15/98
Frequency of Issue: Monthly, except two issues in November
Number of Issues Published Annually: 13
Annual Subscription Rate: $34.95
Complete Mailing aAddress of Known Office of Publication: Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Suite D200 Renton, WA 98055
Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Suite D200 Renton, WA 98055
Publisher: Wendy Noritake, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Suite D200, Renton, WA 98055
Editor: Dave Gross, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Suite D200, Renton, WA 98055
Managing Editor: Pierce Watters, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Suite D200, Renton, WA 98055
Owner: Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Suite D200, Renton, WA 98055
Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgates, or Other Securities: None.

EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION
Circulation Data from December 1998

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding Twelve Months	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
Total Number of Copies	50,795	63,406
Total Paid and/or Requested Subscriptions	10,230	11,217
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	—	—
Sales Through Dealers, Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	27,264	30,136
Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	—	—
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	37,494	41,353
Free Distribution Through the USPS	266	270
Free Distribution Outside the Mail	—	—
Total Free Distribution	266	270
Total Distribution	37,760	41,623
Copies not Distributed	13,035	21,783
Total	50,795	63,406
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	99.30	99.35

FORGOTTEN REALMS

HERO DESIGN CONTEST

Threat from the Sea

the oceans of toril are churning. A terrible evil has risen from the depths of the Trackless Sea, threatening everything in its path. The sahuagin and other undersea denizens are mobilizing for an all-out assault on Faerûn, beginning with Waterdeep. This is the tale of *Rising Tide*, the first novel in TSR's new Threat From the Sea trilogy, by Mel Odom.

the sword coast needs brave heroes. We're looking for some heroes daring enough to face this undersea menace. Design your own FORGOTTEN REALMS® hero for our Rogues Gallery. Give the hero's game statistics, physical description, equipment, background, and purpose. Your hero may live on land, aboard a ship, or under the sea. Any class or race is acceptable. Entries will be judged on originality, game consistency, and format.

each entry should be limited to 650 words. All entries must be received by **March 19, 1999**. The four winning entries will appear in an upcoming "Rogues Gallery" article in *DRAGON® Magazine*, with each hero illustrated by one of our talented artists. Each winner of the contest will also receive a copy of the novel *Rising Tide*, signed by author Mel Odom!

"Threat From the Sea" Hero Design Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your proposed Threat From the Sea Hero ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR"), *DRAGON Magazine* Threat From the Sea Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries may not exceed 650 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), March 19, 1999. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR® judges based on the Entry's format, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: All Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The four winners of the Threat From the Sea Contest shall receive the first novel in the Threat From the Sea trilogy (*Rising Tide*, by Mel Odom) signed by author. The approximate value of this prize is $5.99 U.S. The winning hero Entries will also appear, with appropriate art by TSR artists, in an upcoming issue of *DRAGON Magazine*.

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for, late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Noncompliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to *DRAGON Magazine* Threat From the Sea Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by March 31, 1999. Allow four (4) weeks for delivery of winners list.

TSR, AD&D, FORGOTTEN REALMS, and DRAGON are registered trademarks of TSR, Inc., a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. © 1999 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

"Threat From the Sea" Hero Design Contest

Name : _____

Address : _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Profiles

MEL ODOM

FORGOTTEN REALMS® author
Mel Odom doesn't just write about the setting—he plays there, too.

by Stephen Kenson

Author Mel Odom has big plans brewing, plans that will rise up from the depths and alter the future of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting.

When he isn't busy changing the face of Faerûn, Odom spends time with his family. Working at home gives him the opportunity to be with his kids. In addition to coaching their baseball and basketball teams, Mel also plays the AD&D® game with two of his five children (ages 15, 15, 12, 9, and 1).

"We play modules right out of *DUNGEON® Adventures*," he says. "My nine year-old loves going through all the books and modules and asking 'Dad, will you run this?' or saying 'You should put this in your next book.' The Side-Treks are great because they're something I can just run in an evening. It's a lot of fun." Having fun with AD&D is what it's all about, as far as Odom is concerned. With fun in mind, he writes with an emphasis on action and adventure.

Mel sold his first book in January of 1988, and there's been no stopping him since. Ten years and dozens of books later, this prolific author of fantasy and science-fiction adventure novels and stories brought his talents to TSR with two books based on the F.R.E.E.Lancers campaign setting for the TOP SECRET/S.I.® game (*F.R.E.E.Lancers* and *F.R.E.E.Fall*). He followed them with *The Lost Library of Cormanthyr*, his first FORGOTTEN REALMS novel.

Odom often hears from AD&D players about how his work affects their own games. "A lot of email I've gotten is from people who are using characters and things from my novel in their AD&D games," he says. "One DM gave *The Lost Library of Cormanthyr* to a player to use as a guide for how a Chaotic Good Ranger should act. I never even really thought about the character's alignment when I was writing it; it just worked out that way."

Mel has a talent for bringing to his novels such elements of the game world. "I've never really done game stats for characters in my books before I write them, but I do go over the character classes, the kits, and the spells to learn just what the characters can do and how they act. I research the characters and try to make them unique. You can't just have a 'generic fighter'; you have to bring a personality, a history, and a point of view to the person."

Still, Odom considers being true to the game world important. "You have to pay more attention to detail in a game world," he says. "You have to home in and find out what is important about that world, but it can't read like a brochure. It has to be a real world with real people. The game details have to blend in and be there, but the story is what's important. What I bring to the world is a lot of action. I bring a sense of urgency and characters who are real. That's what people like most about the stories."

With the success of *Lost Library*, Odom is writing the upcoming Threat from the Sea trilogy. It's a series with major implications for the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. He can't reveal too much about it, but he did offer the following hints: "Basically, an evil that has been buried for thousands of years has risen from the sea and turned against the surface world. A lot happens in these books, and the map of Toril will not be the same afterward. A lot of people are going to be shocked and amazed."

The novel trilogy begins with *Rising Tide*, set for release this month, exactly eleven years since Mel's first book sale. It is followed by *Under Fallen Stars* in September and concludes with *The Sea Devil's Eye* and the *Realms of the Deep* anthology next year. Game sourcebook tie-ins are planned to coincide with the novels, allowing players in FORGOTTEN REALMS games to follow the events of the trilogy.

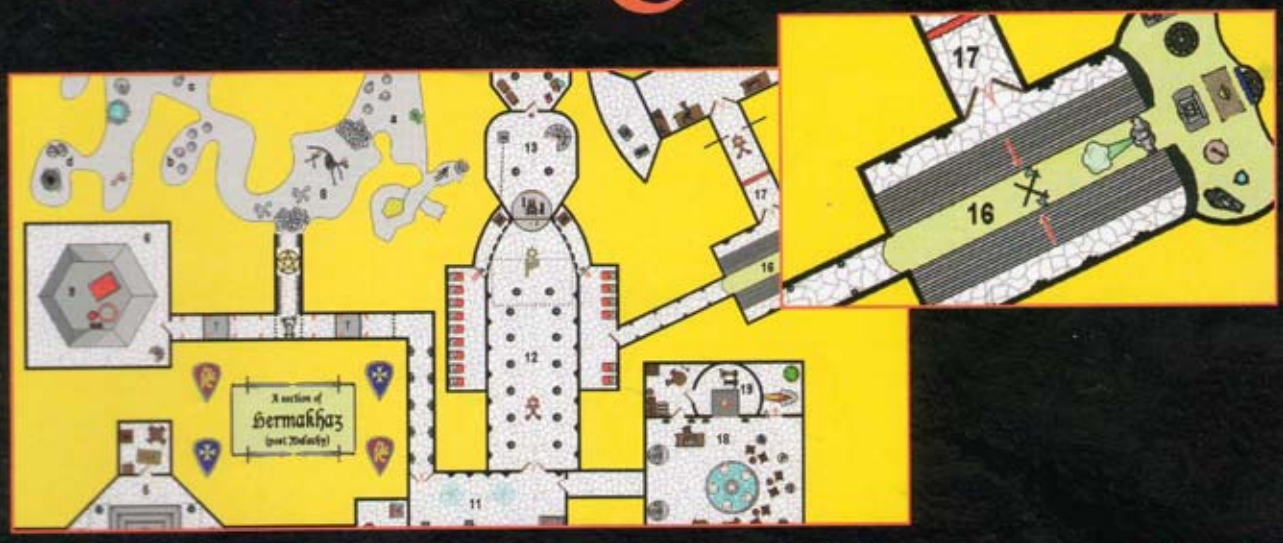
"The Realms are very big and very fun to play in. Almost anything can happen there. That's one of the things I love about them," Odom says. He also loves hearing from readers of his books and can be reached by email at **denimbyte@aol.com**.

When he's not writing, Mel spends time reading and doing research. Of course, he always makes time to do things with his family. "I love spending time with my kids," he says, cleverly planning to blend work and play by bringing a few more of them into his FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign soon.

Windows® 95/98 & Windows® NT 4

New from Profantasy Software Ltd

Dungeon Designer 2



Dungeon Designer 2 is the eagerly awaited first add-on product for Campaign Cartographer 2 and the Core Rules 2.0 Campaign Mapper.

For CC2 and Campaign Mapper users
DD2 has over 400 stunning symbols to make dungeon maps and floor plans beautiful. There are symbols for devious traps, doors, windows, strange statues, temple features and many others. You can create simple, distinctive generic maps or create professional quality full colour artwork for RPG publications.

For CC2 users
A single button click takes you to a new set of menus and icons that give you walls, easy corridors, t-junctions, crossroads as well as shortcuts to the different symbol catalogs. Break doors into walls with ease. DD2 has an optional "tiled" approach to building dungeons and dungeon sections that lets you prepare and print a dungeon design in minutes.

Dungeon Designer 2 is US$36.95 in the US and Canada, £24.95 in the rest of the world.
Upgrade for DOS users of Dungeon Designer US$27.95 in the US and Canada, £18.95 elsewhere.

TO ORDER
If your retailer does not stock Dungeon Designer 2
Internet go to ProFantasy's website at http://www.profantasy.com
In the US and Canada phone 1-800-841-1487 (Shipping $7.00, Rush Shipping $12.50)
Elsewhere phone UK 0171 738 8877 or fax UK 0171 738 8282 (£5.00 P&P UK, £10.00 elsewhere)

Questions?
e-mail dd2@profantasy.com or call our pre-sales enquiry line on 1-800-281-2411 8AM-8PM Hawaii Standard Time

Requirements
DD2 requires Campaign Cartographer 2 or AD&D® Core Rules 2.0 Campaign Mapper.
System requirements are any PC that runs Windows® 95/NT4/98 and an 800x600 display

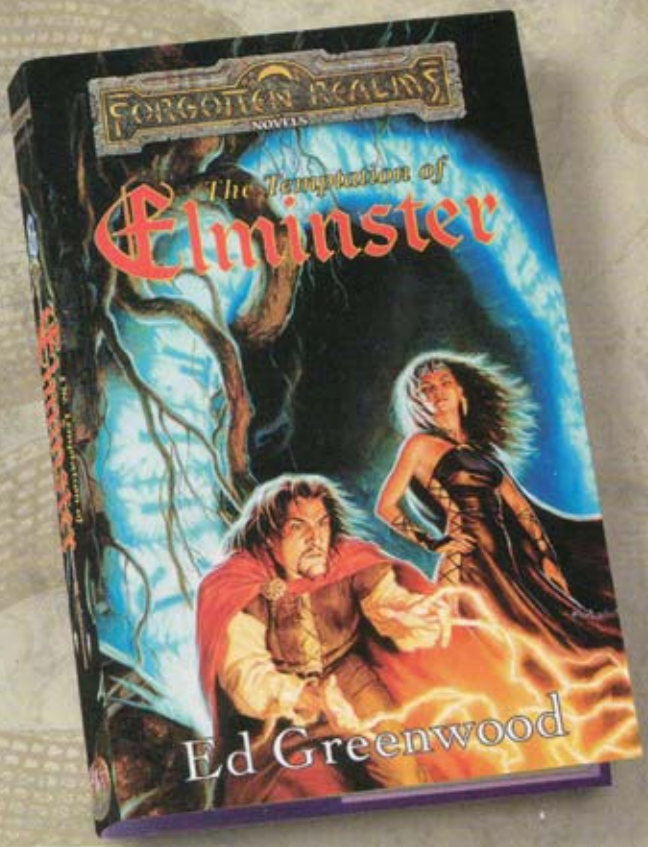
The design revolution goes underground!

Campaign Mapper, AD&D and Core Rules 2.0 are trademarks owned by TSR. Windows is a trademark owned by the Microsoft Corporation.
Other trademarks are owned by **ProFantasy Software Ltd.**

History is filled with Temptation

The mightiest wizard of Faerûn wasn't always so sure of the path he would take. Journey back to the ancient days of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, and witness *The Temptation of Elminster*. It's a tale you'll find hard to resist.

"Ed Greenwood, the All-Father of the Realms, spins a tale that enraptures and enchants!"
—Jeff Grubb



The Temptation of Elminster • Ed Greenwood
TSR# 8588 • ISBN# 0-7869-1189-1
Available December '98
www.tsr.com • For more information call (800) 324-6496

® designates a trademark owned by TSR, Inc. © 1998 TSR, Inc. All rights reserved. TSR, Inc. is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.